NOVEMBER 1967

Commentary

VOLUME FORTY-FOUR, NUMBER FIVE

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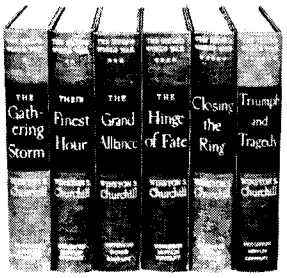

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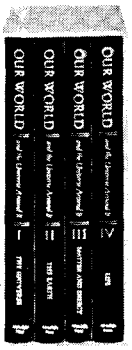

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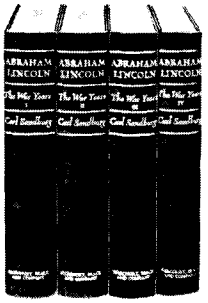

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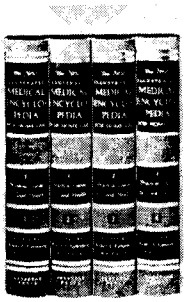

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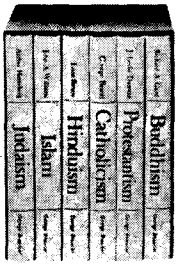

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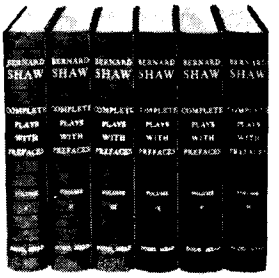

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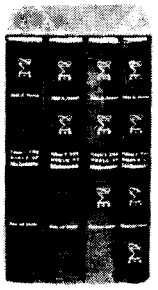

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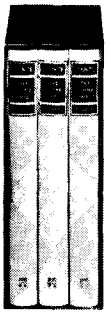

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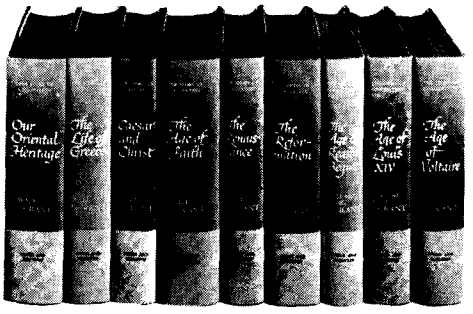

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NUMBER 5
VOLUME 44

The American Left & Israel	27	Martin Peretz
Henry Luce & His Time	35	Joseph Epstein
The Culture of Modernism	48	Irving Howe
Judaism, Christianity & the Western Tradition	61	Hans Jonas
The Sound of Bob Dylan	71	Ellen Willis

Observations

Rise and Slay!	81	John Thompson
When He Is Bad	86	Robert Alter
Death in Life	87	Theodore Solotaroff

Letters from Readers 6

Books in Review

Children of Crisis, by Robert Coles	91	Mary Ellmann
The New Listener's Companion and Record Guide, by B. H. Haggin; The Toscanini Musicians Knew, by B. H. Haggin	94	Seymour Rudin
Three Popes and the Jews, by Pinhas E. Lapide	100	Guenter Lewy
John F. Kennedy and American Catholicism, by Lawrence H. Fuchs	105	James O'Gara
Léon Blum: Humanist in Politics, by Joel Colton	108	Annie Kriegel

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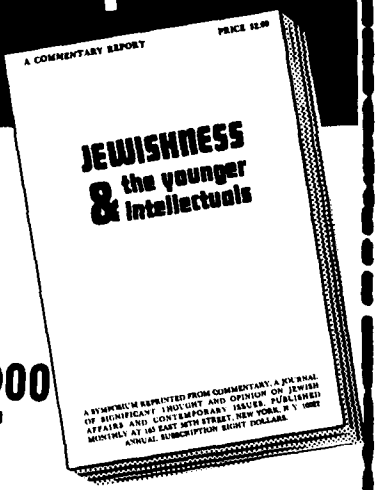

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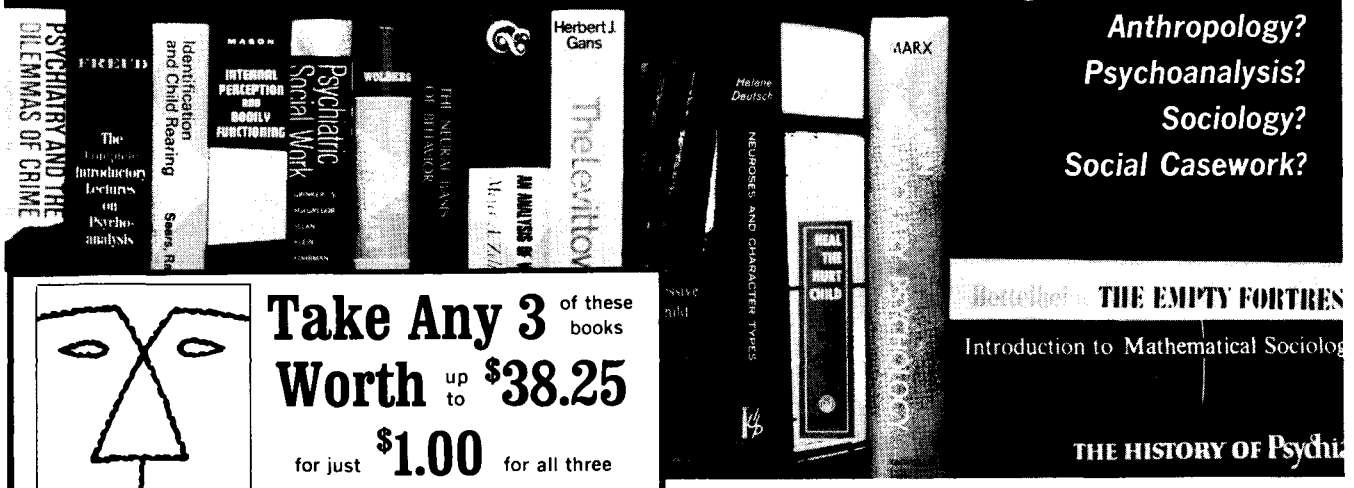

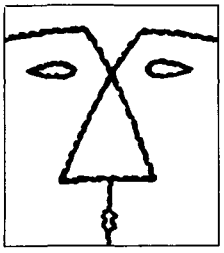

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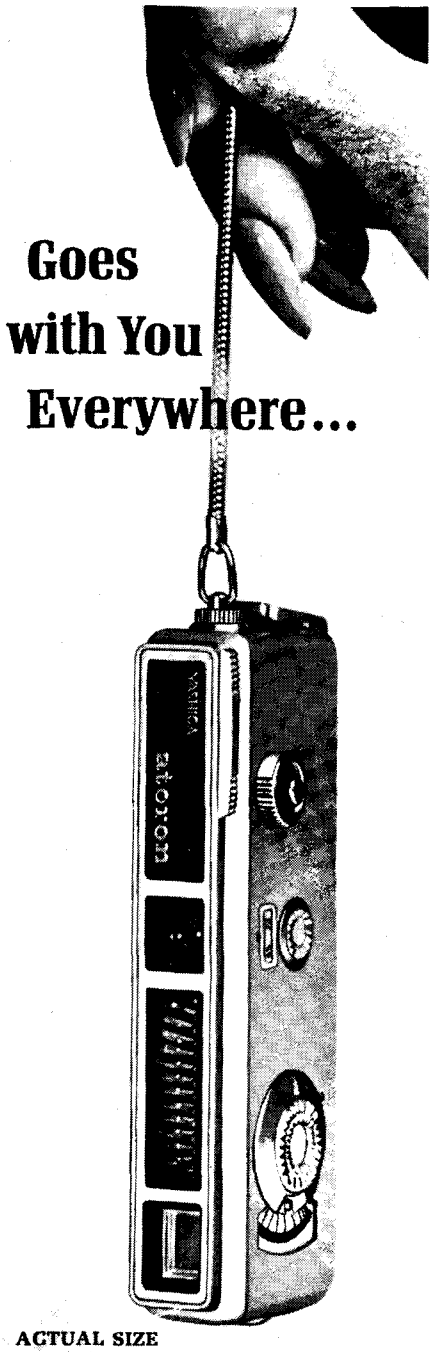

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LETTERS FROM READERS

The Six-Day War

To the Editor of Commentary:

Commentary has again performed a unique service with its four articles on the various aspects of the recent war in the Middle East ["Israel and World Politics," by Theodore Draper; "Israel and the Arabs," by Walter Laqueur; Israel and American Jewry," by Arthur Hertzberg; "Letter from Sinai," by Amos Elon; August]. However, none of the articles mentioned a fact which is of extreme concern to the United States: the tremendous political gains made by the Soviet Union in the aftermath of the Six-Day War. It is a paradox that the influence of the Soviet Union in the Middle East is probably greater now than it was before the war. . . .

Paralyzed by our Vietnam involvement, our relative inaction has permitted the Russians to change drastically the political balance in this vital area; our government, far from having been rescued from a dilemma, has lost important ground. In my opinion, this change in the power balance in the Middle East will eventually overshadow the actual outcome of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Walter A. Sheldon
Long Beach, New York

To the Editor of Commentary:

You are to be complimented for the four essays on Israel. . . .

Why France officially turned her face away from Israel and toward the UAR might be explained by a recent report of the Western Offshore Drilling and Exploration Co. They disclose a contract to drill for offshore oil in Africa and Middle Eastern waters for an operating company owned by several French oil producers. Perhaps this is why de Gaulle is suddenly friendly with the Arabs. Could not his speeches against Israel be payment for these oil concessions?

A. T. Loewy
Tarrytown, New York

To the Editor of Commentary:

I read everything Theodore Draper writes with great care, because I find him to be the clearest thinker the U.S. has today—or has had in a long time—where international political problems and crises are concerned. His article, "Israel and World Politics," is an example of his lucidity as well as of his extraordinary gift for analysis.

Draper's history of the birth of Israel and of its dramatic relations with Egypt and with the rest of the Arab world is at once concise, complete, and clear. But the most important aspect of this work—what we might call the main arch of the edifice he constructs—is his explanation of the crisis of June 1967—the crisis which led, with a kind of fatality, as in Greek tragedy, to the Arab-Israeli war.

Draper's central thesis is that the war was the product of two forces operating from different directions. One, external, was the intervention of the great world powers—the USSR and the U.S.—in the politics of the Middle East. The other, internal, was the struggle within the UAR for leadership of the Arab world. In these terms, we can easily understand why Nasser brought the situation to the brink of war but did not attempt to resolve it. And the keystone of this arch is Draper's brief but adequate description of what are sometimes called small, controlled wars. Thus the poor nations of the world are now, and will be in the near future, the scene of controlled wars organized in one form or another by the great powers. Each of the great powers, to be sure, seeks its ends through different methods, but both endeavor to fight by supporting, and with the support of, their natural allies.

In the case of the generous aid given to Egypt and Syria by the USSR, a political plan is apparent which is not limited to governments. The USSR has made a great effort, over the years, toward winning the heart—the sympathies, the emotions, the gratitude—of all the Arab peoples, not only of the people and government of Egypt.

An army is always an expression of the society which created it, and a society which is at a low level of development cannot make efficient use of a modern army. Moreover, not even a highly developed country can successfully use a modern army in an underdeveloped area, as Vietnam, Alger-

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Commentary

ia, the Dominican Republic, and Egypt demonstrate. In Vietnam and Algeria, two underdeveloped countries, the French army (coming from a highly industrialized country) was defeated; in South Vietnam and in the Dominican Republic, the native armies, organized and equipped as engineers of modern war, were pulverized by the Vietcong and by the people, respectively; the Egyptian armies have been twice defeated by Israel, a society which is modern, albeit to a limited extent. On the other hand, the people of these poor countries are invaluable in revolutionary wars, as was proved in North Vietnam, in Algeria, and in Santo Domingo, and as is now being shown in South Vietnam. The USSR seeks to win the good will of these nations because the USSR believes, with good logic, that revolution will be the appropriate response to any world crisis the U.S. might provoke.

The USSR is practicing power politics just as the U.S. is. But while the American strategy consists of reliance upon, and support of, the small ruling groups of each country and each region, the Russian strategy is directed toward winning the endorsement of the masses, and, wherever possible, also of their governments, as is the case in Egypt and Syria.

This struggle of great powers is reflected in the concluding section of Draper's article. Here he touches the very nerve of the pathetic situation of the UN, a world organization which was created with so many good intentions, only to be converted in the end into a mere public forum where things are said which have no influence on reality. How can the UN have authority over war and peace if it cannot in the slightest degree alleviate the war of extermination being waged by the U.S. in Vietnam?

We live today in a time of deception, but a privileged few with character and intelligence are engaged in accumulating data which prove that not all of humanity has allowed itself to be implicated in the crime. Theodore Draper is one of these few. For this he deserves admiration and respect.

JUAN BOSCH

Benidorm, Spain

[Further correspondence on our August coverage of the Six-Day War will appear in the December issue.]

Art & Politics

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . I agree with your reviewer, Denis Donoghue, that John Harrison's book, *The Reactionaries,* is in many ways unsatisfactory [August]. Mr. Harrison seems to have set up a formula into which he places the five writers under consideration (Yeats, Lewis, Pound, Eliot, and Lawrence), and consequently his treatment of the authors and their texts becomes mechanical and loses the flexibility necessary to good criticism. . . .

Nevertheless, I think Mr. Donoghue misses much of the significance of *The Reactionaries.* Anyone with even a limited knowledge of contemporary literature has at one time or another been exposed to the idea that these writers expressed reactionary tendencies. No one to my knowledge, however, has attempted—as Mr. Harrison has—to view them as a group representing a major literary trend with general social significance. Thus *The Reactionaries* should be seen as a work of intellectual history, rather than one of literary criticism. . . . Such books are what the sterile field of criticism needs. . . .

. . . I also take exception to Mr. Donoghue's closing remarks about the primacy of the imagination in the aesthetics of modern literary criticism. Since, according to Donoghue, we universally accept the complete freedom of writers to express their imaginations—to a point, in fact, where the acceptance of the imagination is almost a "totalitarian" rule in criticism—he asks why critics like Harrison complain when a writer's imagination expresses totalitarian political ideas. This is a completely specious argument, and perhaps Mr. Donoghue was joking. . . . However, he goes on to state that writers, as part of an imaginative elite, must necessarily have a critical relation to the masses, and thus an aesthetic theory which would "chime with a democratic politics," although possible, has never resulted in any literature of importance. Once again Mr. Donoghue is confusing the issues. . . . Although Mr. Harrison attempted to relate the aesthetics of these writers to their political ideas and only succeeded in the most general way, one does not have to assume that style necessarily has anything to do with political thought. Wordsworth, for example, made a great effort to

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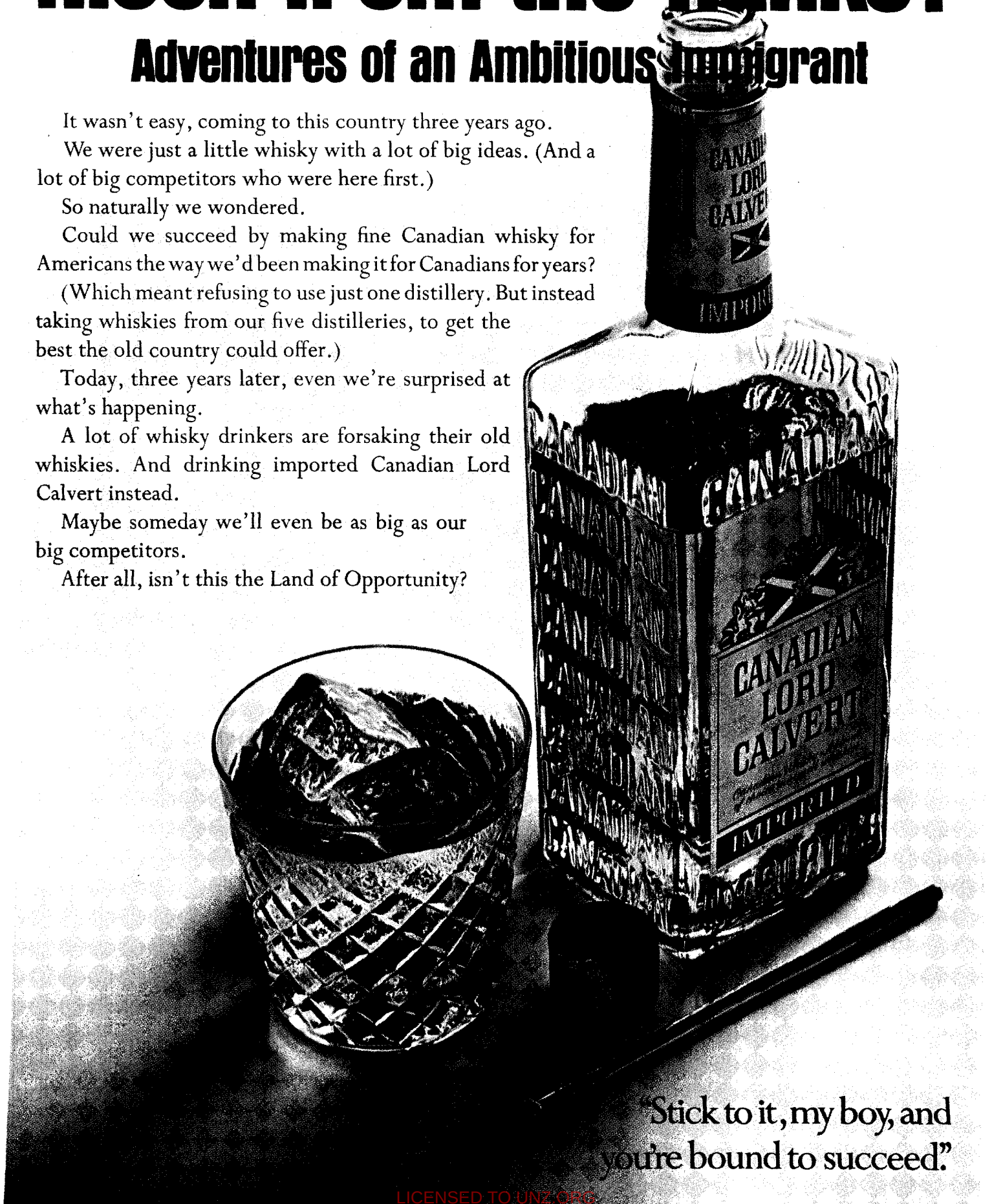

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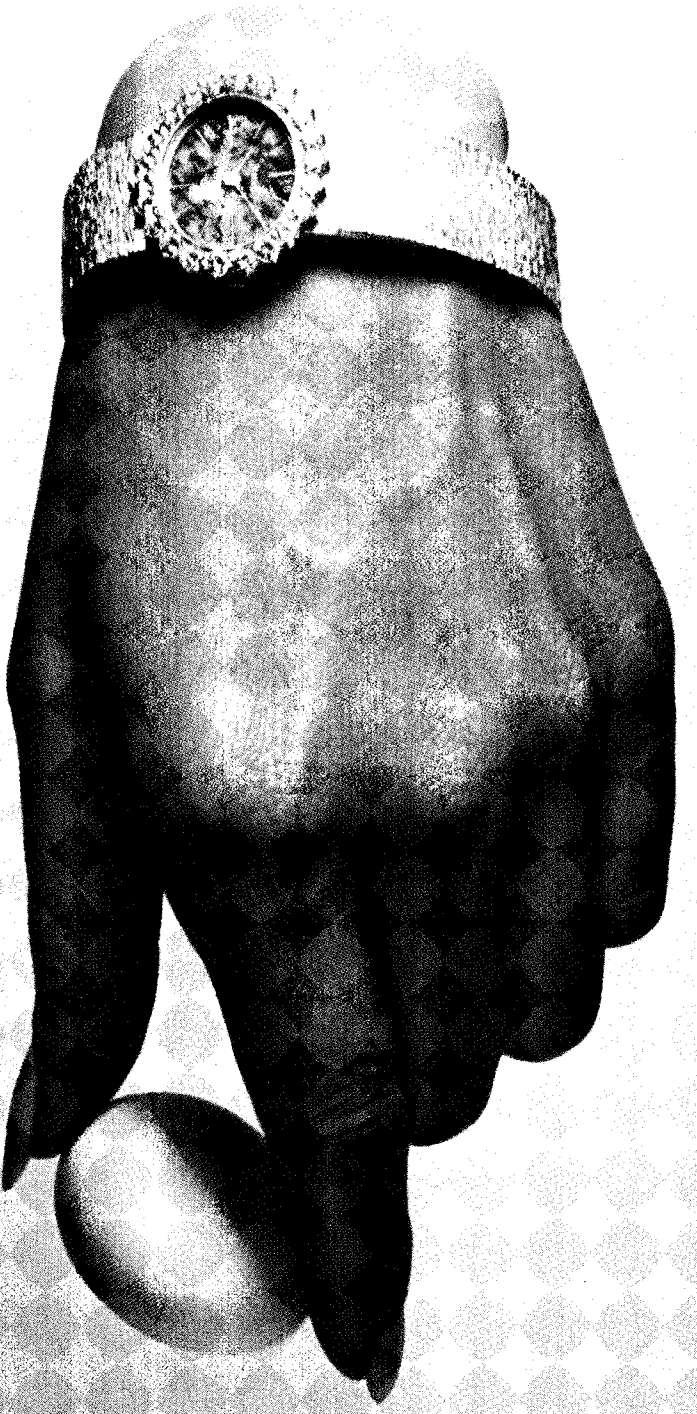

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establish a democratic aesthetic, but nevertheless wrote poems, particularly in his later years, which are extremely conservative in their political outlook. And in fact there has been very great art written for the masses. The best examples of this come from Shakespeare, who wrote for an audience that included both the members of the court and the common people. . . . The fact that great writers are in an imaginative elite dose not in any way preclude the appreciation and understanding of their works by those less gifted.

Finally, one hopes that the time has come for critics like Mr. Donoghue to accept the fact that if literature is to be something more than a vehicle for pure aesthetic enjoyment, more than a playground for gifted children, then the writer must be responsible for the more serious aspects of his work, particularly the political ones. By assuming that writers must necessarily be conservative because they belong to an imaginative elite, Mr. Donoghue removes the possibility of political differentiation from literature, a situation which I, for one, consider very dangerous.

CARL M. SILVERMAN
Graduate School of English
University of Chicago
Chicago, Illinois

MR. DONOGHUE writes:

I find it hard to recognize my own thoughts in Mr. Silverman's paraphrase. Words strain, crack, and sometimes break, apparently, by the time they return from Chicago. However. . . .

I agree that a study of these five writers in a political context is highly desirable. All the more regrettable, then, that Mr. Harrison's book is so defective. The job will have to be done again, more scrupulously next time.

On the other main point: I was merely indicating certain dominant assumptions in modern aesthetic theory and taking the occasion to describe them as "totalitarian." The matter arose from Mr. Harrison's saying (quite rightly) that these writers "based their political and social criticism on the same principles as their imaginative writing and literary criticism." I think it is time we took a close look at those principles. My own remarks were pointed in that direction and still seem to me valid, as far as they go. They were not meant to go very far.

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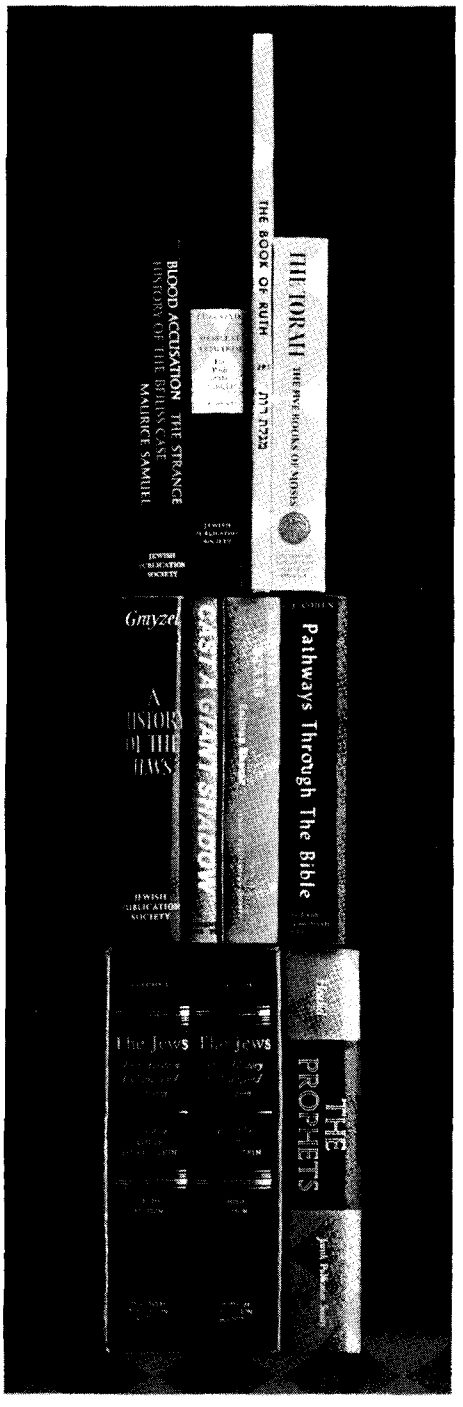

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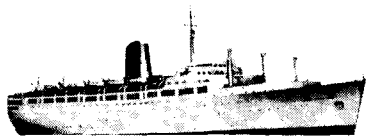

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Author Replies

To the Editor of Commentary:

In his long and thoughtful review of my book, *Warrant for Genocide* [July], Walter Laqueur has overlooked or misapprehended three points which are absolutely central to my argument and, in my view, absolutely indispensable to a full understanding of the exterminatory kind of anti-Semitism:

(1) In Christendom—and only in Christendom—Jews as a collectivity easily attract the projections associated with the image of the bad parent, both because Judaism stands in a parental relation to Christianity and because the God of the Jews has the attributes of a father but not of a son, while the God of the Christians has both. Traditionally, insofar as Jews are imagined as the killers of Jesus, they are imagined chiefly as killers of the son. Thanks to these age-old associations, not only Rothschild in modern times but also the objectively helpless Jew of the Middle Ages was imagined as infinitely powerful as well as infinitely cruel. (See the medieval woodcut of a ritual murder reproduced in my book; above all, see Joshua Trachtenberg's admirable *The Devil and the Jews.*)

(2) I never said that anti-Semitism as such is a paranoiac form of schizophrenia. What I said is that a body of Jew-killers behaves like a paranoiac in the grip of his delusion. And the medieval sources (they are summarized in my earlier book, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*) show that this was as true in 1096 and 1349 as in the 19th and 20th centuries.

(3) There is, nevertheless, a major difference between the modern myth of the Jewish world-conspiracy and the anti-Semitic demonology of earlier centuries. In the 19th and 20th centuries, some Jews have played an important part in European life as bankers, journalists, and radical politicians. This helped to create a new fantasy—of the Jew as the creator and master of the modern world. It is this identification of the Jew with the forces of modernity—superimposed on the older demonology—that finds expression in the *Protocols,* and that forms the principal theme of *Warrant for Genocide.*

As for the more general question of the relevance of psychoanalytical insights to the problem

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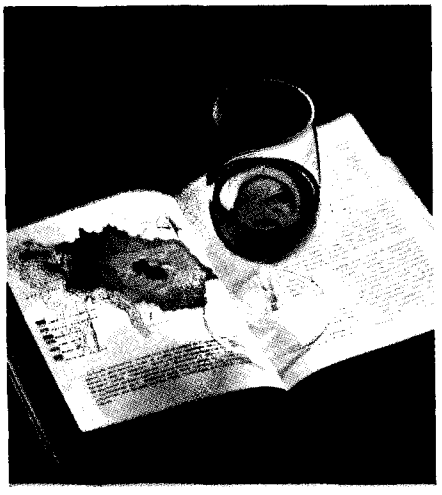

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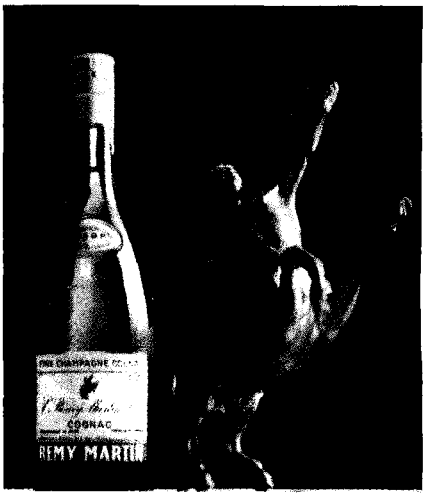

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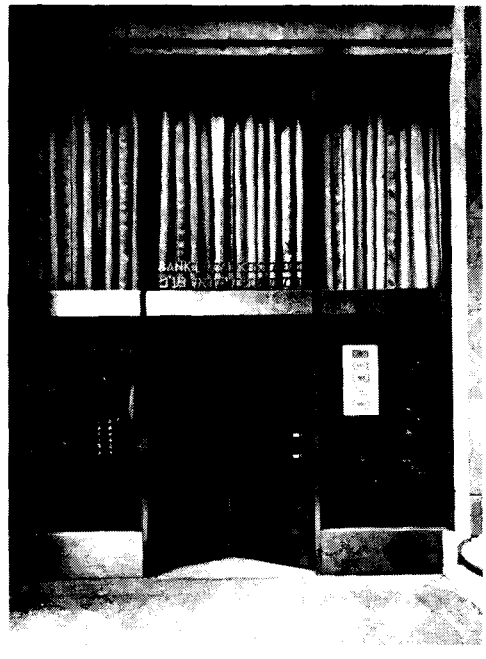

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of exterminatory anti-Semitism: Nobody in his senses would suggest that the massive Jew-killings which punctuate European history from the 11th to the 20th century can be explained in psychoanalytical terms alone. In each case, social, economic, and political processes and situations must be examined in detail—how else can one understand why outbreaks occur when and where they do? Nevertheless in each case one finds a residue which still demands explanation. Why have ordinary, normal people, in situations of mass catastrophe, disorientation, and impotence, been so willing to believe in stories of ritual murder and well-poisoning, or, more recently, in fabrications such as the *Protocols*?

I suggest it is because in such situations very many people undergo a partial regression to infantile modes of thinking and feeling. And why, when a professional group of Jew-killers comes into being, is it both so absolute in its destructiveness and so terrified of its victims? I suggest it is because such groups always contain a proportion of fanatics, i.e., people whose imaginations are wholly dominated by fantasies stemming from early infancy. In both categories—the disoriented normal and the fanatical—the traditional stereotype of the Jew as omnipotent tyrant, with its unconscious Oedipal content, can exercise a deadly fascination.

Of course, as Walter Laqueur remarks, such hypotheses do not constitute "a new historical approach"—but then, who wants one? They do help one to understand certain facts that otherwise are incomprehensible—and surely that is something gained.

NORMAN COHN

London, England

Containment

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I tend to agree with Mr. Steel's thoughts in his "The 'Yellow Peril' Revisited" [June], hoping that opinions such as these will bring about a more flexible policy on the part of the present administration.

I must ask, though, how far we are expected to go in encouraging nationalism among Asian countries? Must we put aside our opposing ideologies entirely? Mr. Steel is indeed stretching the point when he states:

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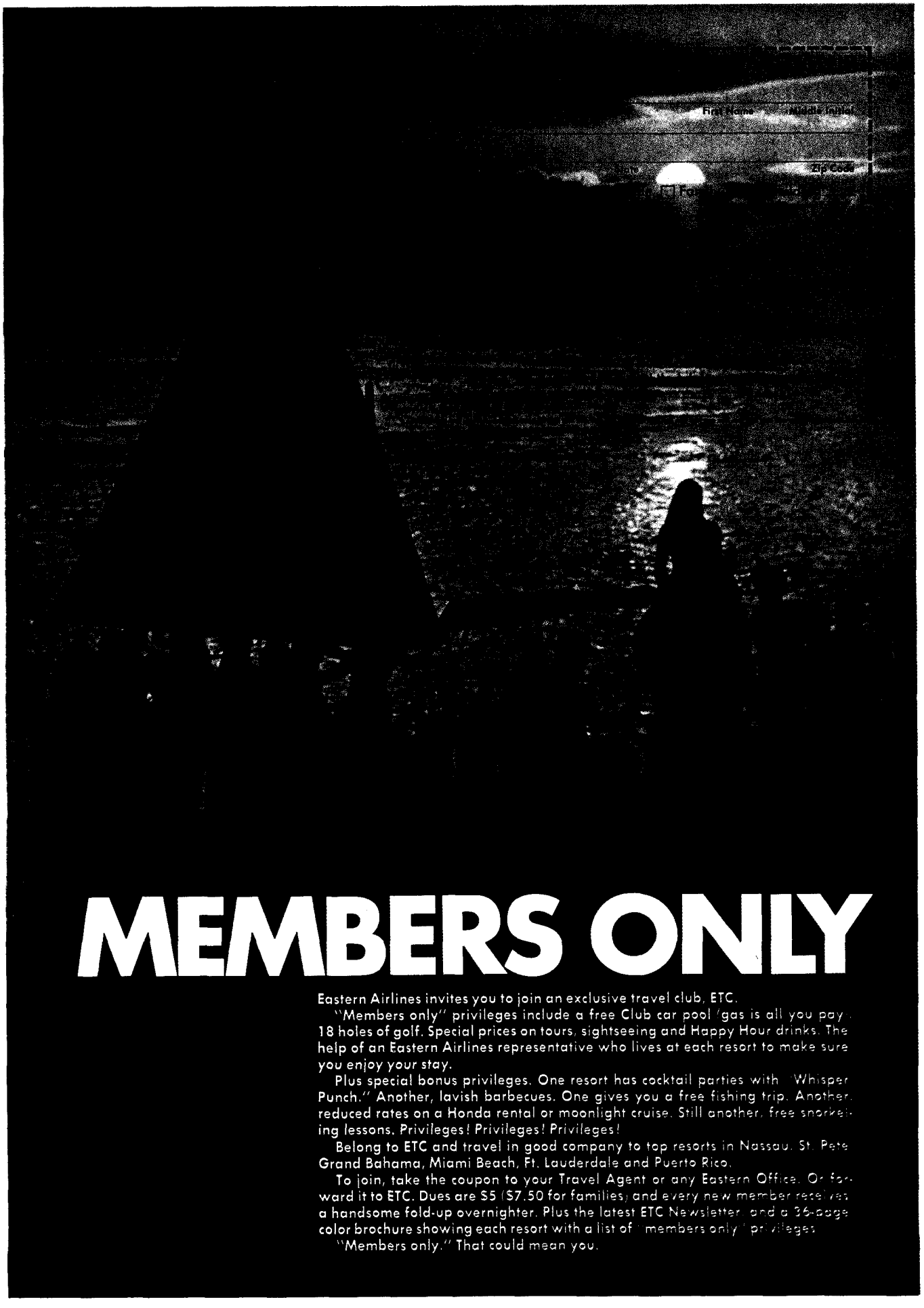

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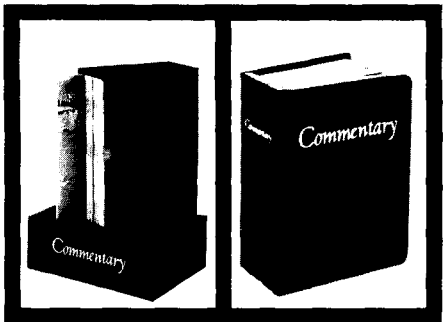

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. . . that the United States would not be fighting a war in Vietnam today, that it would not have dared become so deeply involved with its own troops, if China already possessed her own nuclear arsenal.

Does this mean that some countries must fall to Communism while we encourage this nationalism in others? This is indeed the nuclear blackmail about which we have heard before.

Some time in the future an atomic stalemate may be reached in Asia, but in the meantime let us not be so foolhardy as to abandon entirely our own anti-Communist view in hopes that maybe China is not the belligerent we think she is.

HOWARD W. COLEMAN
East Rutherford, New Jersey

MR. STEEL writes:

We do not have to encourage nationalism in Asian countries; it is already a powerful force. But we should recognize that we cannot always channel it into anti-Communism, and we should show the same realism toward Asian Communism that we have now learned to show toward East European Communism. It is China's weakness, I suggest, which has allowed President Johnson to try to impose an anti-Communist mold in Asia, even while abjuring it in Europe. If there is nuclear blackmail taking place in Asia, it is hardly the Chinese who are currently practicing it.

Whither Austria?

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

As an ex-Austrian who has repeatedly visited his native country in the postwar period, I must testify, with a sorrowful heart, that Paul Lendvai's research ["The New Austria and The Old Nazis," September] is above criticism. Recalling my experiences in the 20's and 30's, I must concede that the minority which bravely opposed bigotry, Fascism, and Nazism waged a hopless battle against a mass—reaching from Viennese university professors down to near-illiterate Tyrolean peasants—that was pathologically reactionary. Even the Social Democrats, who drew their strength largely from the unionized workers of Vienna and the country's Jewish intellectuals, made basic mistakes in their campaign for progress. They battled religion, instead of campaigning

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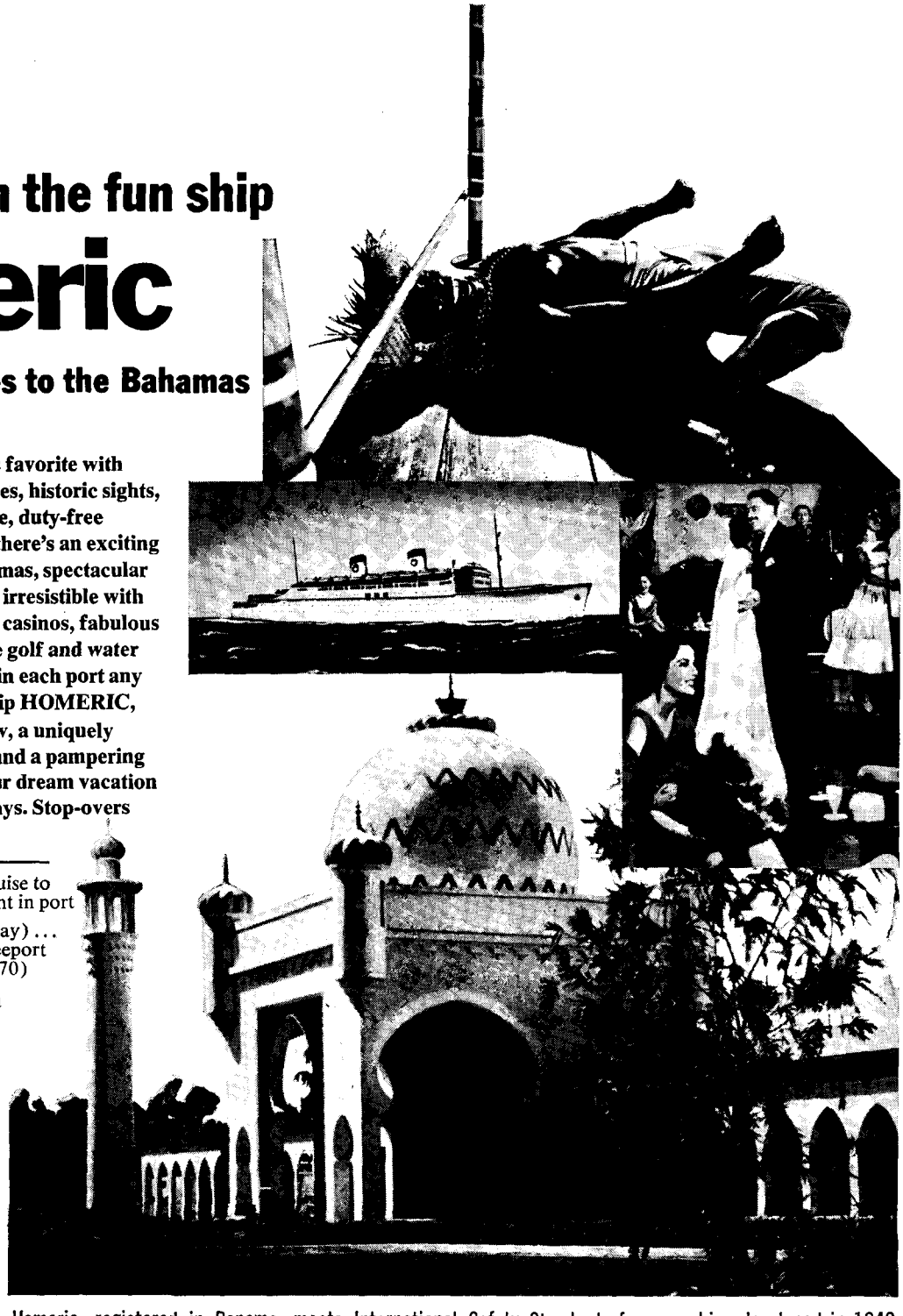

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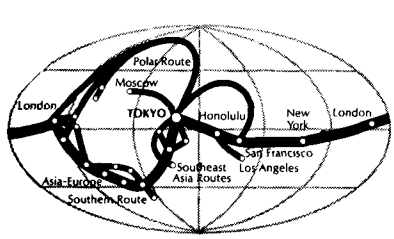

for religious freedom, and they (including their Jewish-born leaders) urged Jews to sever all their connections with Judaism, and, in particular, Zionism. It is unfortunately true that, to quote Lendvai, the *Anschluss* "met with popular approval." I venture to say that the percentage of non-Nazis was much larger in the Germany of 1933 than it was in the Austria of 1938, and—on the strength of my own experiences and of what I gathered from fellow-inmates at Dachau and subsequently at a British internment camp—that, on the whole, the German civilian population was less prone to anti-Semitic violence than the Austrian.

Lendvai's essay needs one correction, though. He does not stress sufficiently the opposition of the younger generation to all the evils of a parochial, chauvinistic, or neo-Fascist mentality. The young student mentioned at the start of the article is far from alone in his abhorrence of neo-Nazism and related trends. On a recent visit to Vienna, I saw a mass demonstration of students carrying placards with slogans denouncing anti-Semitism as well as restrictive measures on the part of the university authorities. I cannot recall having seen anything of this sort in my youth! While it is deplorable that the extreme right-wing student organization recently obtained nearly 30 per cent of the vote, to be fair, let us emphasize the fact that 70 per cent did *not* join the near-Nazi RFS. I would like to remind Mr. Lendvai that during the First Austrian Republic the vast majority of Austrian students belonged to reactionary and/or Nazi organizations. . . .

Undoubtedly, many Austrian judges have bad Nazi records, and should not have been permitted to continue in their judicial posts. At the same time, I do know enough young intellectuals—writers, artists, composers, actors, scientists, museum curators—to be able to state that most of the members of this group have liberal and progressive attitudes not unlike their counterparts in the U.S. Austria's literary cabarets, . . . her little magazines, her bold poets and committed artists, her new filmmakers, her pro-Israel enthusiasts—almost convince me that the Austria of tomorrow is bound to be better than today's, let alone yesterday's.

ALFRED WERNER

New York City

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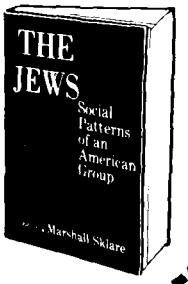

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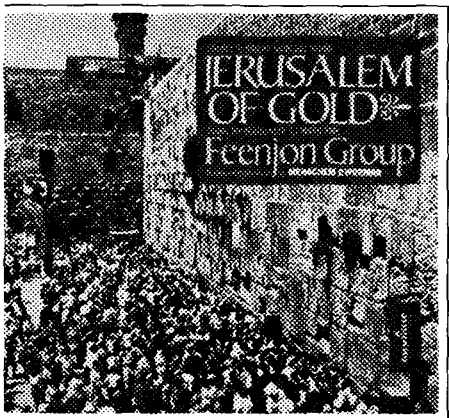

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MR. LENDVAI writes:

When comparing the present to the past, Mr. Werner may be justified in emphasizing the fact that 70 per cent of the Austrian students did not vote for RFS (the extreme right-wing student organization). But they now live in an independent and democratic Second Republic, so it can hardly be regarded as encouraging that one in three students voters, having been born and brought up after the Holocaust, opts for the carriers of pan-German and chauvinistic ideas. While the share of the extreme right-wing Freedom Party in the popular vote fell from 11.6 per cent in 1949 to 5.5 per cent in 1966, the RFS managed to increase its share from 12 per cent in 1951 to almost 30 per cent this year. Even allowing for the fact that many students do not go to the polls at all, this means that the number of students voting for the RFS has increased fourfold.

At the same time, it would be a dangerous oversimplification to equate a vote for the RFS with a militant anti-Semitism and neo-Nazism. In many cases, it is a form of protest against the establishment, influenced by an educational system which has often evaded the need to explain the "ticklish" periods of recent Austrian history to the young people.

Nevertheless, the original version of my article, written in February, did contain a more hopeful reference to the young generation which, unfortunately, together with additional documentary evidence, had to be cut by the Editor due to lack of space. I agree with Mr. Werner that the popular response to the Middle East conflict bodes well for the future of the Austrian democracy. The press and public opinion, including the young generation, was overwhelmingly and unexpectedly pro-Israel. It was public pressure which forced an initially reluctant Government to reject the Yugoslav draft resolution at the UN and to vote for the Latin American proposal, despite the temptation to remain a neutral fence-sitter.

Author Defended

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . I was quite disappointed in the shabby, careless treatment Chaim Potok's novel, *The Chosen*, received from your reviewer, Baruch Hochman [September].

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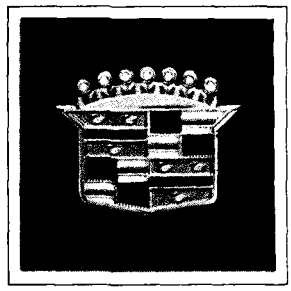

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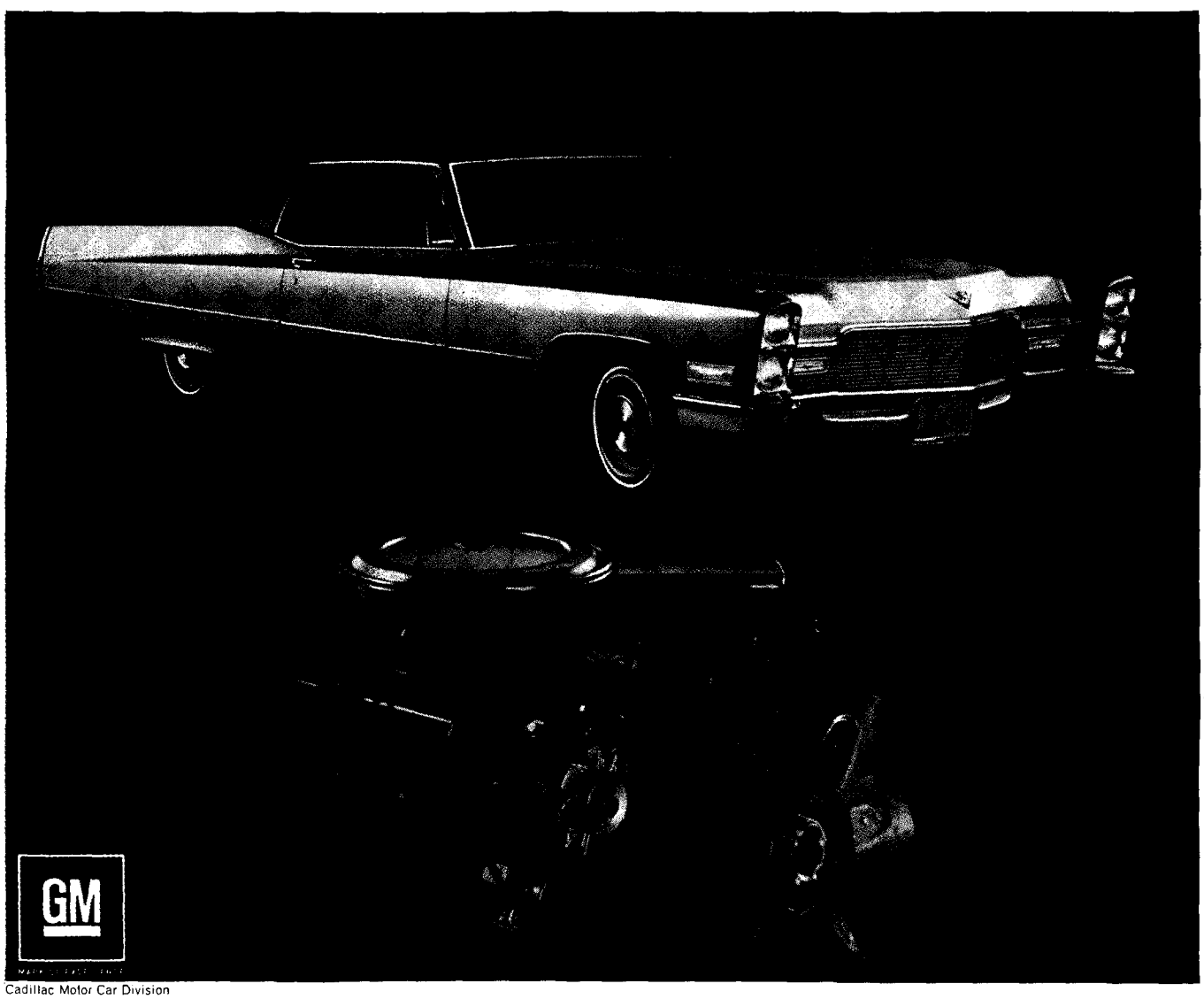

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RENA BLUMBERG
Shaker Heights, Ohio

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Mr. Hochman failed to grasp the nature of the relationship between Reb and Dan Saunders throughout *The Chosen*, though it was obvious to most readers, I'm sure. He also failed to recognize a comprehensive and authoritative essay on mysticism *vis-à-vis* modernism skillfully packaged in a compelling novel. For these blind spots, Mr. Hochman has my condolences.

M. E. ROBBINS
Danville, Illinois

Going to the Mikveh

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I enjoyed Sanford Ungar's "Moving the Mikveh" [September] and am somewhat apologetic about registering the following quibble. Ungar quotes me on the significance of the *mikveh* as a measure for determining who is a committed Orthodox Jew. He notes that Wilkes-Barre has a Jewish population of about 5,500 and quotes estimates that from twenty to forty people use the *mikveh*. He then concludes that less than 1 per cent of Wilkes-Barre's Jews use a *mikveh*, which leaves the impression that less than 1 per cent of Wilkes-Barre's Jews are committed Orthodox. This, of course, does not follow. Only married women who menstruate are obliged to attend the *mikveh*. If we assume that the sex ratio and age distribution of Wilkes-Barre's Jews is equivalent to that of the total Jewish population of the U.S. (as detailed in the 1957 survey of the Bureau of the Census), then, according to my estimate, about 4 per cent of the eligible population use the *mikveh*.

CHARLES S. LIEBMAN
Yeshiva University
New York City

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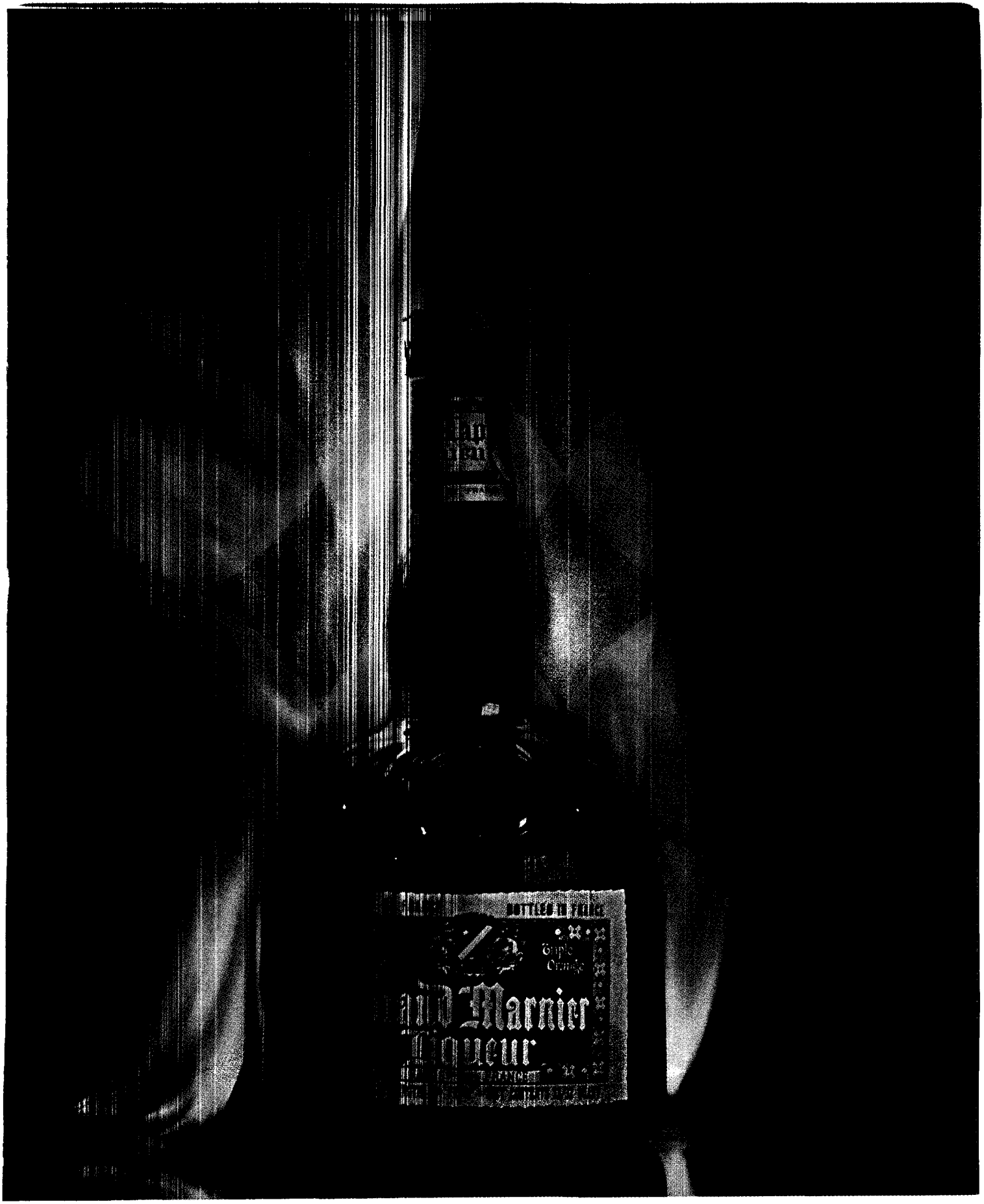

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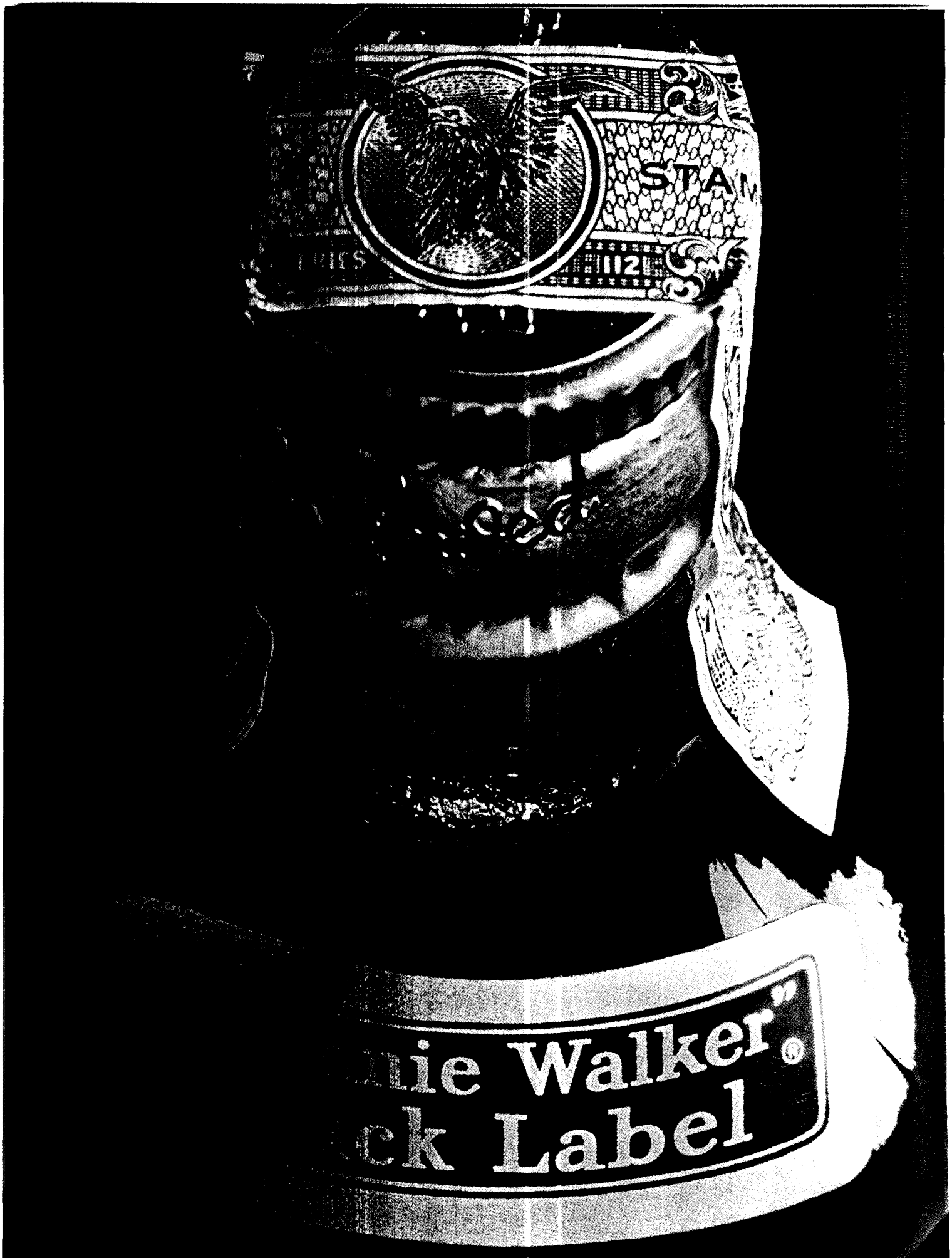

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THE AMERICAN LEFT AND ISRAEL

MARTIN PERETZ

IT IS HARD to imagine what would happen to the intellectual and moral style of the Left if radicalism ever became the dominant force in American politics. In the present circumstances, however hyperbolic and egregious its verbal and tactical excesses, the Left can always, and often does, explain or justify its hardened positions by reference to its minority status. Whether the issue is the Negro struggle, Vietnam, or—most recently—the Arab-Israel conflict, each and every new dogmatism, not excluding the most incendiary, lays claim to serious attention by characterizing itself as a courageous heresy. It may well be that all these years of unrequited love for the people have made the ethical sense of radicals dependent on the assurance of their marginality. With the stunning intrusion of the Middle East crisis onto a stage long monopolized by Vietnam, this habit has reached new heights of righteous arrogance and absurdity. For never before has a self-proclaimed heterodoxy, defiant and *of course* daring in its unpopularity, been so quickly established on the American Left as the ideologically correct view of a situation shrouded in ideological ambiguity. The American involvement in Vietnam is now commonly viewed on the Left as an exercise in genocide, a race war against coloreds, but that particular heterodoxy took some years to graduate into orthodoxy. And even now, the more sensible though no less committed in the peace ranks—i.e., those still insistent upon drawing important distinctions—are troubled by such vulgar and altogether gratuitous distortions of truths which are sufficiently horrendous in themselves.

Where the Middle East is concerned, the doctrine which has won so quick an acceptance—in the sectarian press of the Left, in the writings of occasional emissaries to the "outside" world, in discussions among movement activists, and in the resolutions adopted at the disastrous convention of the National Conference for New Politics in Chicago last September—is that Israel and Israel alone must bear the blame for the past and the responsibility for the future. Not, it should be clear, only for the plight of the Arab refugees, but for the behavior of the Arab regimes as well, and even (how powerful little Israel must have become!) for the policy of the Soviet Union, its sycophants (at least when Jews are in question), and virtually the entire Third World.

Now, it is decidedly not the case that, of the many hundreds of thousands who have marched and worked for peace in Vietnam and associated themselves in concrete ways with the battle for Negro rights, any very substantial percentage thought of themselves last spring as hostile to the state of Israel. A large number, in fact, shared the anxieties of those weeks for Israel's very survival and the relief at its liberation from imminent fear. It is precisely because so many of the Left rank-and-file feel both existential and rational ties to the people of Israel, while the radical ideologues at the top are in almost complete sympathy with the politics of Israel's enemies, that there have developed within every part of the peace and rights constituency fissures shattering the fragile unities cemented by the war in Vietnam.

Again, as so often in the past, the political and journalistic leadership of Left movements has isolated itself from the main body of its support and from its professed moral foundations. A cynicism bred of the frustrations of failure has combined with an ideological absolutism induced and continually strengthened by the persistent irrelevance of what the leadership thinks to whatever actually happens in history, and this lethal combination has forced much American radical opinion on the problems of the Israel-Arab area into the mold of Third Force socialist rhetoric. Ironically, this is true not only for the small and dreary bands on the Left still faithful to Moscow or Peking; it holds equally for the leadership of those diverse groups and groupings independent of Communist discipline and spiritual sway. But within the latter category, the orthodox notion of Israel as "imperialist" or as a neo-imperialist instrument makes sense only to those embittered rank-and-filers for whom the side in a dispute which engages the open and general support of Americans is *ipso facto* bound to be in the wrong. The Jewish radicals and other ideological agnostics who have been unable to accept this reading of Israel's role are being forced out of the movement. Yet their departure only succors the posture of unhonored prophecy which the leadership has always affected. At the same time, the theory that the middle

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classes are unreliable radicals gains currency, and another convenient betrayal is imagined to excuse the Left's declining fortunes. Meanwhile the myth that the wretched everywhere will rise some day allows for hope to spring eternal.

IF IN DESCRIBING the situation in such terms, one wonders for a moment whether one has constructed a caricature, one need only look at the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) to be reassured of its verisimilitude. From the early days of the personality cult of Stokely Carmichael, SNCC had found itself continually allaying the apprehensions of its supporters. "Did Carmichael *really* call for the burning to the ground of Western civilization?" "Distortions of the reactionary press," came back the predictable explanation. I was among those who eagerly accepted such brazenly offered blandishments. But Carmichael is an articulate and irrepressible young man. After a brief time, the comforting words no longer persuaded. And soon they were dropped; inflammatory invective had become the very stuff of SNCC's program. Indeed, there is a saddening parallel between SNCC and the Third World governments it apotheosizes. "From what at home does he now flee?" asks the poet Lermontov. As with the Nasser, Nkrumah, Sukarno, and perhaps even Boumedienne regimes, SNCC's hapless forays into international affairs were at once cause and effect of its failure as an indigenous radical movement. The inability to sustain the discipline and elan of cadres doing prosaic and largely unrecognized, though nonetheless revolutionary, work results in a politics of desperate fancy. From Hanoi and Havana, SNCC's leaders deliver ever more threatening and empty pronunciamentos; and James Forman, the organization's once dignified and decent long-time executive secretary, is consumed as its majordomo Foreign Minister, jetsetting through African capitals with his earnest message of solidarity from a few handfuls of people who do not work very hard.

SNCC's recent attack in its official newsletter on Israel and Zionism was met with shock, but it should have come as no surprise. The group's heroes—publicly avowed at last—had, after all, already secured Israel a central place in its demonology. The apocryphal writings of Che Guevara, for example, fit Israel into "the International of Crime and Treason." By extension, of course, all its Arab enemies, however retrograde, become part of the nascent oppositionist—will it be called the fifth?—international. Since SNCC sees issues only in the grossest terms, there is not even in its position a concession of Israel's right to exist—a right which even the Soviet Union and Cuba reaffirmed in their otherwise belligerent and cruelly mendacious statements at the United Nations.

Nor is SNCC overly concerned, as some of Israel's critics are, with dissociating its anti-Zionism from anti-Semitism (though the distinction is not an always easy one, and though "anti-Zionism" has often been an all too transparent cover for anti-Semitism pure and simple). After questioning by the press, SNCC's spokesman, one Ralph Featherstone, suddenly seemed to be seized by such scruples, but his answers, no less than the original "fact sheet," belie his claim of being interested in indicting "only Jewish oppressors." The imagery in word and picture in this document is so shot through with anti-Semitic overtones that only the most benighted and willfully innocent can fail to see either its malice or the intent behind it. Rothschilds are clumsily juxtaposed with allusions to international conspiracy, Moshe Dayan's epaulets have dollar signs for insignia, and the dollar sign is again pictured helping the Star of David to strangle both Nasser and Mohammed Ali—all surrounded by a collection of sheer falsehoods and half-truths about Israel. It is a document reminiscent of a populist anti-Semitism as old as socialism itself—the "socialism of fools," August Bebel termed it.

This tradition has always vexed radicals who do not own to its canons and it still does. (Many of these radicals, however, would not now be nearly so embarrassed had SNCC contented itself with its customary hostility against *all* whites.) Thus it is that for some of us the unique history of Jewish suffering still establishes limits on what can be tolerated from those whose faults we are anxious to overlook. Yet by the same token, radicals have by their indulgent silence up to now opened themselves to this most recent experience of race hatred from within their own ranks—and not only from SNCC.

A CERTAIN NAIVETE about the purity and virtue of the revolutionary world has characterized much Left and anti-war sentiment in America. In consequence of this naivete, the response of many radicals to the Middle East crisis was confused by the fraternal greetings from Ho Chi Minh to Nasser and the fantastic charge by a Cuban officer that Israel used Nazis in its drive through Sinai (a converse confusion was created by Marshal Ky's statement of support for Israel). Here, after all, was a little country, and a progressive one at that, threatened at its very foundations—and yet here too were all the countries the Left considers victims of American imperialism allied against it in a cabal of what Abba Eban aptly and inventively called politicide. The willingness to sacrifice small countries for large stakes was supposed to be a Washington specialty, but slowly it began to dawn on some elements of the Left that cynicism was amply distributed around the globe and around the political spectrum. Walter Laqueur has only hinted in these pages* at the havoc wrought in Left alignments all over the world by such realizations. From Poland the case of the dismissed generals, from Czechoslovakia the cam-

* "Israel, the Arabs, and World Opinion," August 1967.

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paign against Ladislaw Mnacko (recalling the Greek action against Melina Mercouri), stubborn rumblings here, cautious and politic retreats there, all testify to the difficulty with which the anti-Israel line went down in Left circles everywhere.*

Some demurrers from the official Left version of the war had a pathetically heroic quality about them—for example, the independent thrust of the *Jewish Morning Freiheit*, the Yiddish daily equivalent of *The Worker*. It cannot be easy, even if one is Jewish and Israel is involved, to end decades of fellow-traveling. Similarly, *Jewish Currents*, an occasionally intelligent though conventionally pro-Russian Left periodical (which had, however, already tested itself on the question of Soviet anti-Semitism at least on cultural matters), published an exhaustive account of pro-Israel sentiment throughout the "progressive" world. Those who automatically trooped behind Moscow are likely to find their capacity to work with broadly based Left groups, only recently somewhat restored, greatly impaired. As with the Communists in the nascent French popular front, American Communists may soon find themselves on the outside of an exclusionary policy that independent radicals will have little trouble in justifying.

There is hardly an issue on which the newspapers *New America* and the *National Guardian* agree. The former is a monthly publication representing the remnant of organized social democracy in this country; the latter, now terming itself "an independent radical newsweekly," is a strident sheet on the far Left fringes of Third-Camp socialism. For some time now, the two have been at war over the modern variations on the old divisive themes. Early this summer, however, the *National Guardian* made a special point of telling its readers it was echoing *New America*'s fears that the Israel issue would seriously rupture the Left just when it could least afford a split. The apprehensions were not groundless. But to argue at that point against a split in the ranks of the Left was in fact to urge that Israel's friends agree as to the relative insignificance of a matter that stirred their minds and hearts no less surely and genuinely than the agony of Vietnam. This could not help but awake in many the distressed sense that radicals, for all the humane sentiments they profess, are not above the callous politics of their own governments. It was unavoidable, once so much of the eminent Left had moved against Israel, and in particularly reprehensible ways, that the blessedly naive and the intransigently principled should, like Arnold Wesker in England, also begin to ask themselves desperate questions: about the individuals and periodicals they had come to trust; about the political positions and moral perspectives they had long thought of as their own. These months, then, have been trying ones; and it is not likely that the Left will soon recover from the malaise of lost confidence which, exemplified by bitter acrimony or nervous silence, now afflicts it.

THE STRAINS in the radicalisms of Europe and the developing world are limited in number—deriving from a grand philosophic system, the crucible of some traumatic historic experience, or both—and they all have an obvious ideological character and a definitive institutional ancestry. Nothing of the sort can be said of our own radical insurgencies. The thought patterns of the American Left are a pastiche of many traditions. Because some of these have been quietly absorbed through the impact of a leading figure, or as fallout from an earlier crisis—in any case, largely without the imprint of a corporate identity or organizational sponsorship—the Middle East crisis found individuals involved in movements whose sometimes barely articulated precepts were, they now discovered, at odds with their deepest instincts. In the long weeks of Israel's heightening insecurity, one would turn to comrades from old struggles and find them full of reproach.

The confirmed pacifist was reproachful quite simply because he could not brook the idea of a just war which now appealed to many peace activists. Likewise, the principled isolationists, of whom there are still considerable numbers, were aghast at the calls for American action in the Middle East emanating from the very people who had along with them denounced intervention by Washington in Vietnam, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic. Lastly, those rare visionaries of universalism, some of whom had also opposed the establishment of the State of Israel, were horrified by the upsurge of nationalist and even chauvinist sentiment occasioned by Israel's conflict with the Arabs. That Jews in the peace movement, like Erich Fromm and David Riesman, were of this party, provoked many pro-Zionists to an irrational venom that does scarce justice to the real issues at stake (although it must be said that the effort to counter hysterical passions of the pro-Israel variety would not always be matched by any comparable intolerance of Arab xenophobia). This occasional asymmetry notwithstanding, such views were argued with an integrity that it is difficult to fault. Indeed, much less disillusionment would have set in had Left anti-Zionist sentiment generally been of this order. As it happens, however, no Left press or organization to speak of reflected these values (except to appropriate them in anomalous contexts).

Once Israel was off the front pages, or on them at its own instigation, it became possible to sort out one's emotions and thoughts. What became increasingly clear was that many on the Left had swallowed an ill-digested, even a thoughtless, pacifism. What had begun as an emi-

*On the twisting line of the French Communists, see also the article by the left-wing *arabisant* Roger Paret in the *Wiener Library Bulletin*, New Series, No. 8.

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nently reasonable nuclear pacifism slowly had been rendered into a pacifism pure and simple—or a pacifism which still allowed for the violence of revolutionaries. By its horrors, the Vietnam adventure indubitably hastened this process, and only something like the experience of Israel could have made respectable again in certain circles the notion that some countries fight some wars for good and sufficient reasons.

The question of American intervention was more complicated, in no small measure because Israel itself wanted no part of U.S. military action on its behalf. The Left taboo against American interventions had prospered on the confident surety that any decisive response by Washington to a political crisis was likely to be at the service of some landlord class or army junta. The refusal of the U.S. to act against the blockade of Eilat should tend, of course, to confirm this conviction. But in mid-May, the situation was such that an intervention at the Gulf might have averted a war and, ironically, brought down upon this country hardly more ire than its non-intervention. Moreover, as radicals had been saying whenever America sought to isolate a country by sea, a blockade was an act of war not only against the country blockaded but against all who wished to trade with it—that is, an act against the world's peace. Some critics of the Vietnam war saw this instantly and lent their names to statements appealing for American action, eliciting from both Mr. Johnson's friend John Roche and from William Buckley their characteristically impudent humor.

In the aftermath, it was only natural that there should be some vigorous rethinking of attitudes. Some would recall, for example, that H. Stuart Hughes, the first and most distinguished peace candidate, had, in *An Approach to Peace* (1962), delineated criteria according to which it would be a radical's imperative to support intervention in defense of certain countries. Israel clearly fit these criteria in almost every way, surely as much as Republican Spain had. Nor would there be any need, for those able to see the difference between Israel and Vietnam, to take refuge in fatuities like Arthur Schlesinger's statement: "I think it inconsistent to favor unilateral intervention in one part of the world when I'm already opposed to unilateral intervention in another. . . ." In any case, if radicals sought sanctions against Rhodesia or South Africa, then sanctions against a belligerent Egypt or support for a threatened Israel also made sense. As to the plenary isolationism of recent fashion, it will doubtless no longer have the easy appeal it had when only reactionary forces could be conceived of as a beneficiary of American power.

One's moral *bona fides* as a leftist has come to depend these days on some species of withdrawal position on Vietnam and a corresponding contempt for the more equivocating and politic approaches. If, after all, the war in Vietnam is viewed as an utterly indefensible enterprise, a crime against Vietnamese and Americans alike, then bombing pause stratagems are rightly seen as diversions from real issues. And even if the Left has been unduly rigid and exclusionary on this score, at least it cannot be taxed for lack of clarity. Those of us in the radical community, then, for whom Israel's rights are on the same moral plane as the rights of the Vietnamese, have drawn a kind of moral cut-off line on this issue; other radicals cannot deny or reasonably plead against it in the name of unity. For certain anti-Israel positions cast a shadow over the intellectual probity and political responsibility of men and movements which had commanded serious attention and strong loyalties as a result of their early and forthright stand against the war in Vietnam.

In general, it appears that the Left is still reluctant to face up to Russian mischief in the world. From the old and quasi-official party-liners, one has of course come to expect portrayals of the Soviet Union in colors similar to those Dean Rusk reserves for the United States. *New World Review*, a doctrinaire little monthly, did not disappoint these expectations in its analysis of the crisis, and the *National Guardian* was sensitive enough to the same expectations to omit from its coverage of the UN proceedings the more embarrassing aspects of Premier Kosygin's diplomacy. As part of the same syndrome comes a facile anti-Americanism. Thus Sidney Lens—echoing a widespread notion in the peace movement—asserts in a lead editorial in the June *Liberation* that he would not dismiss the possibility that Johnson sent planes to bomb Jordan or Egypt. This lie was subsequently to be disavowed by Hussein himself, but its falsity should have been obvious even in June from the behavior of the Johnson administration, which not only sought to keep Israel from military action, but was anxious to force a settlement of the Gulf dispute that would derogate Israeli sovereignty.

PERHAPS THE MOST blatant (and influential) example of the tendency to shy away from a confrontation with Russia's inflammatory role in the Middle East can be found in I. F. Stone's ample writings on the Israel-Arab dispute—in several issues of his *Weekly*, in a long article in the *New York Review of Books* of August 3, and in a rambling essay in the July *Ramparts*, which according to the cheap coinage of its editor was nothing less than brilliant. A justification of the reluctance to judge Soviet behavior that one often encounters on the Left is that there is already too much criticism of the USSR from other segments of the population. In judging Arab behavior, Mr. Stone is motivated by analogous considerations. "I feel honor bound," he explained in the *New York Review*, "to report the Arab side, especially since the U.S. press is so overwhelmingly pro-Zionist."

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In the service of "honor," then, he purges the anti-Zionist case of its usual vitriol, obfuscates it a bit, and makes it his own. One would think that a writer's compulsion would be to tell the truth, regardless of whether it has been aired or not. But as Marie Syrkin conclusively demonstrates in the current *Midstream*, Mr. Stone has, at least in dealing with the origins of the refugee problem, already shown that he is hardly a reliable guide. For if what he now argues on the testimony of others about a coerced Arab exodus is correct, then his own *first-hand account* of 1948 to the contrary must be wrong—or vice versa. His sleight-of-hand in the present discussion is in any event none too deft. Basing his contentions on British and U.S. monitoring records, he insists that there were no Arab radio appeals in 1948 to the Palestine Arabs that they leave their homes; yet it is he and no one else who has tried to create the impression that the case for Arab instigation of the exodus rests solely on the radio. Nonetheless, one is pleased to find that there are some official documents from the West which Mr. Stone does choose to believe.

The significance for the Left of Mr. Stone's apostasy cannot be overestimated. It may even be more important than the shift in attitudes of the Soviet government. Mr. Stone is widely thought of as an independent journalist,* and his coverage of the Vietnam war (particularly his refutation of the State Department White Paper of 1965) has given the peace movement much of its bearings. Apparently, however, there is wide distress at Mr. Stone's inability to weigh the divergent claims of Arab and Israeli fairly. Quite understandably has he been "shocking many readers," as he reported on July 3, presumably to demonstrate his courage yet again. He has shocked them by discerning a "cheerfully cynical" trend toward chauvinism and militarism in Israel which, he thinks, will turn that country "into an Ishmael . . . a minuscule Prussia . . . a new Wild West." (The Newark activist Tom Hayden, only verbally less restrained, conjures up a Jewish Fascism; Lens evokes an expansionism, its heart set on Damascus and Cairo; the less imaginative refrain is about an Israeli Sparta.) Now given the entreaties of Mr. Stone and his friends all these years for us to realize that this Communist government or that Third World despotism is dictatorial or belligerent or both largely because of the hostility of its neighbors, are we not entitled to expect a like tolerance for Israel? Actually, however, no such tolerance would be appropriate here since the facts are not as Mr. Stone *et al* describe them. It is an old axiom that when there are enemies at the gates, there is terror in the cities. Yet in an Israel besieged by implacable foes for two decades, hampered in its trade, and harassed by virtually continuous violence on its borders, nothing like the garrison state of Mr. Stone's imaginings has come to pass. Even during the Six-Day War, the treatment of Israel's Arabs was almost unexceptionable. Moreover, internal democracy is as secure there now as ever before in the country's history. Leftists might be interested in noting, for example, that Israel alone in the Middle East has a functioning Communist politics with representation in the Knesset—and with two Communist parties at that. It seems that the Left, so patient with the political grotesqueries of its favored nations, would only be satisfied with an absolutely unflawed Israel, which would mean also an Israel willing to surrender its national existence. The abuse which Israel has long suffered for its fast receding and always limited theocratic aspects is reflective of how inordinately and obsessively critical have been those who have decided to be critical.

OF LATE, the fixation has shifted from theocracy to General Dayan and the Israeli military. Mr. Stone, in line with this shift, is concerned to protect Israel's politicians from its generals, though he is favorably impressed by at least one of the latter. But it is a vulgar oversimplification to see Israeli politics in terms of a split along conventional dove-hawk lines between civilian and military. The more militant strategies were long kept at bay by military and politicians alike, undermined only by the Egyptian *casus belli* of mid-May and the international community's indifference to it. Even now, Dayan's authority is severely circumscribed, as the news reports amply show. And for all his Bonapartist posturings—which are by no means characteristic of his colleagues—neither his actions in war nor in troubled peace warrant the apprehensions they have created. Moslem authorities, as an instance, are probably much more secure in their rights and privileges dealing with Dayan's Defense Ministry than they would be with Warhaftig's Ministry of Religion. As for the war itself, we have the testimony of an observer attached to the *Ligue Internationale pour les Droits des Hommes*, confirmed by various Red Cross statements, about a scrupulously restrained military. (Parenthetically, all the wild figures of Arab military casualties have by now been scaled down. The New York *Times* of July 26 reported, for example, that Jordan lost no more than five hundred men, as opposed to the fifteen thousand or more charged by Amman earlier. Syria, to which, according to Paul Jacobs in an exceptionally uninformed report in *Ramparts*, the Israeli victory was "particularly punishing," got off relatively unscathed.) All this makes the talk in left-wing circles about Israel's "mad hawks" (David McReynolds in the *Village Voice* of June 29) simply vicious hyperbole.

Israel's behavior in the aftermath of the war has also provoked much contention. But Martha

* See, for example, my review of his *The Haunted Decade* in *Dissent*, Summer 1964.

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Gellhorn, highly respected by radicals for her hard-hitting reports on the victims of the Vietnam war, has, in a series of articles in the Manchester *Guardian* of July 24, 25, and 26, systematically disposed of the most misleading misconceptions about civilian casualties, the refugees, and the administration of the West Bank. On these points, Mr. Stone betrays some very disconcerting research traits. In his *Weekly* of June 18, he quotes a London *Sunday Telegraph* dispatch testifying to a vague lack of compassion by the Israelis for the Arabs. Since Israel has failed to provide the world with the vengeful atrocities we have come to expect from victorious armies, the unavoidable callousness of war and its consequences are passed off by Mr. Stone as unmitigated horror. No doubt because it would subvert his tendentious argument, he does not refer to Colin Legum, faithfully and wisely cited for years on the Left for his judicious reporting from the Congo and elsewhere in Africa, who gives a detailed and rather different picture of Israeli behavior in several June numbers of the London *Observer*. That there is great suffering on Israel's border no one would wish to deny, but surely humane radicals like Mr. Stone should not be willing to countenance the grim cynicism with which the Arab states, by their own admission, have exploited the refugees for political ends. Thus the United Arab Republic has conceded that it would not allow the settlement of refugees in Arab lands since that would end the Palestine problem.* A more "honor bound" I. F. Stone would not have been inclined to lay the entire blame for the refugee problem on Israel. At the very least, the cruelty of the Arab governments should have cost them his sympathies as a radical.

Interestingly enough, Mr. Stone has the temerity to insist that on these issues he writes, not as a radical, but as a Jew, and he carries this presumption very far. In his article in the *New York Review*, Mr. Stone especially commends the contribution of another Jew, Maxime Rodinson, to the *Les Temps Modernes* symposium on the Arab-Israeli conflict. Stone for some mysterious reason fails to identify Rodinson as a relatively doctrinaire Marxist,† but he does say that Rodinson is "too much the humanist . . . and no doubt the Jew to welcome an apocalyptic solution at the expense of Israel's existence." Too much the Jew indeed! In context, it appears rather that, being a Jew, Rodinson gives proof of his humanism to Mr. Stone by lending "strong support to every basic Arab historical contention." Stone, the old Zionist, is now possessed by a curious nostalgia for the Jew "with a sense of mission as a Witness in the human wilderness." One wonders by what right he presumes to tell the survivors of the camps, the children of the European ghettos, the escapees from the barrios of the Arab world that they should continue to bear Witness? Perhaps Mr. Stone will now counsel our mutual friends in the black freedom movement to content themselves with bearing Witness to the world's injustice.

A paradoxical dialectic is at work here, urging a universalism justifiable only on the most parochial grounds. (One is reminded of the anguished indictment of God by Reb Levi Itzhak of Berditchev, dissatisfied with the conditions of his people's chosenness: "What do you have against Your people, Israel?/Why do You afflict Your people, Israel?/ . . . There must be an end to this/ The exile must come to an end!") The house of Israel must be the first people which, having won a war, should behave as if it were the loser. As metaphysics this may appeal to some temperaments; as politics in the real world, especially given the apparently inveterate irrationality of Arab leadership, it is dangerous cant.

WHERE STONE IS the *éminence grise* of American radicalism, *Ramparts* is its brash young voice. The magazine's dynamic editor, Warren Hinckle, has an intuitive feel for what he calls the "flippy." Now flippiness has its merits, particularly if one is intent on stirring up cauldrons. But it also entails a sacrifice of intellectual rigor. As it happens, moreover, the flippy style coincides nicely with Mr. Hinckle's ideological predispositions. Having discovered anti-anti-Communism, he is now unable to perceive any justice or reason in American opposition to the expansion of Soviet power in the Middle East, though the July *Ramparts* wanly concedes that Russian motives were not of the most salutary in the recent crisis.

Big media journalists are notoriously lax on the matter of expertise, but surely no more on the Right than on the Left. (One astute observer, very sympathetic to the anti-Israel case, has noted the paucity of hard facts to back it up.) Because Paul Jacobs had visited Israel on several occasions and also meets the requirements of flippiness as a writer, he was chosen to provide *Ramparts* with its report on the sources of the crisis. Not surprisingly, his brisk romp through the record weighted the scales against Israel, with the help of numerous distortions and omissions. In discussing 1956, for example, he says that "Israel had made no public outcry about [the nationalization of] the canal," suggesting that she had no interests in it; he fails to inform the reader that Israel's relative silence on this matter was a consequence of the fact that her rights of passage had been continuously violated even when British troops had occupied the zone, under Labor and Conservative governments, and in defiance of a United Nations Resolution of 1951. On the intrusion of the cold war into the area, Jacobs insinuates that Ben Gurion pushed Israel into the West-

* See, for example, Information Department, U.A.R., *The Problem of the Palestinian Refugees* (Cairo 1962), pp. 92-93.

† See his *Islam et Capitalisme* (Paris 1966), as well as his earlier evaluation of Nasserism in the April 1963 *Les Temps Modernes*.

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ern bloc; but he neglects to mention that before the die of Soviet-Israeli hostilities was cast, Israel had voted, despite the unmistakable displeasure of the United States, to seat Peking at the UN, for the complete independence of Libya, along with the Communist countries against a call for free elections throughout the Germanies, and in support of many measures aimed against the Union of South Africa. Nor does he point to the connection between the rupture of diplomatic relations with Moscow in February 1953 and Stalin's demented anti-Semitic campaigns. Most objectionable, finally, are Jacobs's stray remarks, echoed by Stone, on Israeli socialism, for whose spirit and concrete achievements he totally lacks any feel. Is it too much to hope that radicals who see more of socialism in Nasser's rhetoric than in Israel's kibbutzim and moshavim, will one day come to their senses and recognize the realities for what they are? (A reading of Georges Friedmann's judicious and probing *The End of the Jewish People?* might help.)

And why weight the moral scales against Israel? The motives of the Russians are clear enough. Having, through the establishment of the state of Israel, helped create a perpetual thorn in the flesh of American diplomacy toward the Arabs, and having dislodged Great Britain from Palestine, the Soviet Union is now free to employ any methods in courting the Arab world. But it has a good deal to overcome. Theodore Draper has, in his masterful study in these pages,* somewhat understated the responsibility of the USSR for the birth of Israel. When the United States faltered in its support of partition, even on the very day of Israel's independence, when it wanted to retreat to still another plan of trusteeship or diminution of territory, the Soviet Union was unflinching in its support of the Israeli cause. And, most important, at decisive moments in the military struggle, Russia made available to Israel the arms which turned the tide of battle against the Arabs. Thus, to allay Arab resentment over the past, the Russian strategy must now be built on excess. The requirements of ideology are no less demanding.

THE NEW LEFT'S enchantment with the Third World will prove as costly as was its old enchantment with the second, for the erection of double standards inevitably leads to a corruption of the moral sense no less than the political. Stone, for example, can write: "The precedent of the cease-fire resolution at the UN is a most disturbing one. It accepts preventive war and allows the country which launched it to keep the fruits of aggression as a bargaining card." Quite apart from sharing the peculiar American fixation with who fires the first shot,† Stone here entirely ignores what even U Thant has conceded—that Egypt set off the events which led to the present conflagration. Should Israel not have fought for its rights? Should it have risked the bombing of its population centers and not have thrust through the desolate Sinai? Should it, upon victory, have retreated without guarantees?

Stone, of course, shrinks from this political medusa. But only because he seems unwilling as yet to tell us how far he would have Israel go in appeasing the voracious revanchism of the Arab world. In discussing this world, Stone has already given many signs of just how discriminating he is prepared to be. "It is Nasser," he says, "who represents the future and who can create the internal stability so necessary to peace." On what evidence? The fact that Algeria's Boumedienne more threateningly cries for justice to the last drop of non-Algerian blood? Robert Scheer, the Managing Editor of *Ramparts* and a 1964 peace candidate for Congress, is more specifically credulous. According to his on-the-scene report from Cairo, "Nasser was sincere in his resignation and acceptance of responsibility for his defeat." As for Nasser's resignation, Mr. Scheer's certainty must raise some questions. As for the dictator's acceptance of responsibility for the defeat, one wonders why he punitively sacked so many of his officers. Scheer goes on to write that "the notion of exporting revolution to the other Arab countries was abandoned with the secession of Syria in the early '60s. . . ." Not a word about Yemen!

For the November issue of his magazine, Scheer has written what must be the most carefully selective and skewed history of the conflict to come from any source save possibly the propaganda machines of the respective parties. And while he occasionally takes note of Nasser's calculating politics, he settles the burden of tragic events squarely on Israel. Indeed, Israel is seen almost as an unmoved mover. A mere speech by one of its officials is enough, in this reading, to paralyze Nasser in his quest for peace, and indeed to foreclose on the possibilities of revolutionary socialism itself.

BY THE TIME the American Left met as a corporate body in Chicago over Labor Day, the orthodoxy was securely entrenched. (A handful of Hashomer Hatzair members were to be seen wandering about, dazed by the antics of past allies.) Those who in other ages might have quoted Scripture now had recourse to I. F. Stone. The more sophisticated cited the last contribution of Isaac Deutscher in this vale, an interview in the July-August *New Left Review* in which the traditional intellectual pyrotechnics reduces the Israel-Arab conflict to a struggle between reactionary and progressive nationalisms. The Black Caucus had no patience for such refinements. The fifth of its thirteen resolutions, all submitted as one unit and voted on as such, condemned "the imperialistic Zionist war." Scheer took exception to that one, saying, however, that he accepted the others, in-

* "Israel and World Politics," August 1967.

† See Robert W. Tucker, *The Just War* (Baltimore 1960).

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cluding: (1) an attack on the convention steering committee of which he was a member for rigging the gathering against black people; (2) a call for the establishment of "white civilizing committees to civilize and humanize the savage and beast-like character that runs rampant throughout America . . ."; and (3) support for the (unenumerated) resolutions of the Newark Black Power Conference (which *inter alia* denounced birth control). It was a perfect setting for someone of Scheer's considerable talents as a trimmer. But even his transparent maneuver in offering an alternative on the question of Israel, which he assured his hearers was the Egyptian position, did not satisfy the crowd, now so enthusiastically engaged in what Kenneth Rexroth has called "Crow Jimism." Those who could not deny disagreement with at least the Israel resolution, but who voted for them all nonetheless, evoked the image of the Jews in the *Narodnaya Volya* welcoming the pogroms in 1881 as rehearsals for revolution. After the convention had handed over 50 per cent of its votes to an unknown number of unidentified Negroes, the phraseology was quietly changed to a condemnation of the Israeli government's aggression. The New Politics had not even the courage of its perversity.

BUT ISRAEL fortunately has nothing to fear—and had precious little to gain—from what the radical movement in its *Walpurgisnacht* of abasement did or said. Even the smallest and newest Third World country could affect her destiny more. This Third World which she has been said to have alienated is not, however, as monolithic as its partisans on the American Left seem to think. In the United Nations, roughly half of Africa, including the relatively creative governments of Ghana and Kenya, failed to go along with the chorus of condemnation against Israel. Of those that voted for the Yugoslav resolution, Tanzania did so with a visible lack of relish and the Congo (Kinshasa) at least with one eye on the extradition proceedings in Algeria against Tshombe. Among the world's "progressives" could be counted the governments of Spain, Greece, Indonesia, and Nigeria—the latter now waging with the assistance of the Russians a truly cruel war against the Ibo state of Biafra.

The attitude of so many on the Left toward Israel and the Arab world has brought a welcome end of innocence to many other American radicals who will from now on be somewhat more skeptical of all the nostrums of the *enragés* which have been so readily and thoughtlessly accepted—as the desperation bred by the war and the riots in our cities intensifies. It remains to be seen whether out of the intellectual and moral debacle of these past months, a sensible movement with sensible perspectives for peace and human rights can at last emerge.

Ralph E. Samuel
1892-1967

We mourn the passing of Ralph E. Samuel, who played a central part in the founding of COMMENTARY, and who thereafter, in two separate terms as Chairman of the Commentary Publication Committee, gave so generously of his time, his wisdom, and his vision to the editors of this magazine.

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JOSEPH EPSTEIN

HENRY LUCE AND HIS TIME

HENRY LUCE DIED on February 28, 1967, but the mention of his name still manages to ignite passions all over the United States—and the world. One is hard put to find another man outside of politics so much surrounded by controversy. In the pantheon of American businessmen and conservatives, Luce's portrait hangs high: about as high, one imagines, as it hangs in the rogues' gallery of most American intellectuals and liberals. As founder and general impresario of the world's largest publishing empire, Luce's power, though probably immeasureable, was obviously great—so great as to make it almost impossible to sustain a neutral attitude toward him. Many people would agree with the remarks of Gardner Cowles, editorial chairman of Cowles Communications and *Look* magazine, on the occasion of Luce's death: "Henry Luce was a true journalistic genius. There has been no one in journalism for whom I had more admiration and respect. His influence will be felt for generations." Others share the opinion of Norman Mailer, who some years ago insulted an editor of *Time* by suggesting that anyone who worked for a mind so exquisitely and subtly totalitarian as Henry Luce's was not likely to have any ideas of his own.

Since Luce was a figure of indisputable magnitude in American life, his death generated editorials and biographical sketches in all the major papers, including the obligatory full-page V.I.P. obituary in the New York *Times*, and cover stories in both *Newsweek* and his own *Time* magazine. Journalistically, it was an event calculated to numb the senses. As occurs increasingly in these days of so-called "widespread communications," the more one read, the more one's picture of the man blurred, the more one's sense of his remarkable career seemed to fade. It was as if someone had set out to prove that he who lives by journalism shall eventually be obscured by journalism.

As a model of this kind of obfuscation, *Time*'s cover story on Luce is difficult to surpass. At the death of their Editorial Chairman, as Luce styled himself in his last years at Time Inc., one expected the editors to haul out their very best obituary prose and lay a gracious wreath of it at the graveside. But they outdid themselves and produced a full-blown work of landscape architecture. When they had finished, no one—Henry Luce perhaps least of all—would have recognized the terrain. The Luce of the *Time* cover story emerged as "courtly" and "compassionate," with the "magisterial presence of a Koussevitsky" and blue eyes that could "twinkle as merrily as Mr. Pickwick's." He was a "contemporary intellectual" and a "wise general," whose "infinite idealism," along with his "conscience and commitment," led him to extol "the Roman ideal of virtue as dedication to social and civic duty." Presumably, it was the composite of these qualities which made his publications a "valued and trusted voice of America throughout the free world." "He ran the course," one might say—*Time*'s editors, alas, did say—"He kept the faith."

Henry Luce's own self-appraisal was more nearly accurate, more candid, and therefore more admirable. "I am," he once said, "a Protestant, a Republican, and a free-enterpriser, which means I am biased in favor of God, Eisenhower, and the stockholders of Time Inc.—and if anyone who objects doesn't know this by now, why the hell are they still spending 35 cents for the magazine." Not that this statement tells the whole story of Henry Luce either. He was a complex human being, difficult as that fact sometimes is to remember, and thus cannot simply be reduced to his beliefs, nor made to fit the streamlined simplicities of a *Time* cover story.

Oddly enough, for one who had made room for himself at the top so early—he was a self-made millionaire at the age of thirty—and who managed to stay at the top so long, Luce showed remarkably little in the way of personal presence. His few public appearances were inevitably disappointing; his official utterances lacked the vibrancy and flashiness associated with the language of his magazines; his writings, when not altogether banal, were dull and often pompous; and he looked rather more like a well-to-do jeweler or the owner of a Buick agency than what he was: a man of enormous, even towering, stature in the field of magazine publishing.

Then, too, there was Luce's reputed shyness, which, if one thinks of Northcliffe, Beaverbrook,

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or Hearst, is very much at odds with the traditional style of the Press Lord. He was not given to wide self-advertisement. In fact, very little has been written about Henry Luce as a personality. There has been no biography of him, authorized or unauthorized. Wolcott Gibbs's devastating *New Yorker* profile hardly qualifies as such, being memorable primarily as a parody of old *Time-style*. Such knowledge as we have of his personality comes mainly from the biographies, novels, or memoirs of people connected with him in one way or another. To a degree unusual in a man of his position, he appears to have been more content to wield the spotlight than to bask in it.

THE BARE FACTS of Luce's biography are well known, to be sure; they form one of the more substantial chapters in the onward-and-upward annals of American business. Briefly, they are as follows. Henry Luce was born in 1898 to missionary parents at the Presbyterian mission-compound in Tengchow, China. In preparation for the Hotchkiss School in America, he spent one year at the Cheefoo School in China, where birching, caning, and fagging in the English style were in vogue. At Hotchkiss, where he first met Briton Hadden, his future partner, he edited the school's *Literary Monthly* and prepared for Yale. At Yale, where he was a member of Phi Beta Kappa and Skull & Bones, he contributed stories, poems, and essays to the *Literary Magazine*; he also became editor of the Yale *Daily News*, Hadden being chairman of the board. After a brief stint in the army (no overseas duty), he returned to Yale and graduated. Subsequently, he spent a year at Oxford reading history, worked as a legman for the late Ben Hecht on the Chicago *News*, and then joined Hadden on the Baltimore *News*. In 1922, both men quit their jobs on the paper to bring to fruition their longstanding idea of a weekly news magazine, which they thought of calling *Facts*. After the struggle to raise funds, the first issue of the new publication, now of course known as *Time*, appeared on March 3, 1923. The magazine ran in the red until 1927, but thereafter both circulation and profits continued to rise. The idea had caught on; the partners had it made.

So much for the beginnings. In 1929, Briton Hadden died of a streptococcus infection, leaving Luce in control of *Time*. Under Luce, *Time* begat *Fortune*, the two begat *Life*, and other offspring—*Architectural Forum*, "The March of Time," *House and Home*, *Sports Illustrated*, Time-Life Books, etc.—followed in fairly orderly progression. As his fortune and influence grew, Luce became a kind of black eminence. Although it was rumored that he was somewhat disappointed at not being asked to serve in the Eisenhower administration, he apparently felt confident enough of his power to require no formal certification of it through political office. Instead, he settled comfortably into the role of friend to Presidents and Prime Ministers, adviser to statesmen and bishops; praised and revered in some quarters, hated and feared in others, he became a genuine force in American life.

But the question remains—a force for what?

II

HENRY LUCE'S long career divides into three main spheres of activity: there was Luce the businessman; Luce the ideologist, or propagandist, for a specific set of ideas and ideals; and Luce the editor-journalist. Luce the businessman is the least controversial. After all, a popular maxim among businessmen is that "You can't argue with success." Although one might think that there is nothing quite so worthwhile arguing with, the saying nevertheless has a certain inner logic to it. What it actually means, of course, is that you cannot argue with the statistics of success, with the ineluctable finality of the profit-and-loss statement. By his own confession, the businessman's ethic is an intensely practical one, concerned with consequences rather than methods and principles. To quote another favorite business maxim, this one with a slight Yiddish lilt to it, "It's what you got left over that counts!" By this standard, the businessman's sole standard, Luce was a genius.

At his death, what Henry Luce had left over was considerable—a small empire, in fact. Here are a few of the raw statistics:

• During the week of Luce's death, Time Inc.'s four major magazines—*Time*, *Life*, *Fortune*, and *Sports Illustrated*—and their international editions together printed 14,331,458 copies.

• Time Inc.'s revenue for 1966 was $503 million, its net earnings $37.3 million. The current market value of the corporation's 6.9 million shares was $690 million, of which Luce himself, as the largest single stockholder, owned 16.2 per cent at a market value of $109,862,500.

• Time Inc.'s diversification program was of a model kind. According to the New York *Times*, the staggering rate of the appreciation of its market value "is a measure of the success and profitability of the company's magazines, its expansion into other businesses, such as book publishing, radio and television broadcasting, pulp and paper manufacturing, and a variety of other interests, including developments in the graphic arts, information storage and retrieval, and marketing information."

• And all the above started with the relatively piddling beginning capital of $86,000 which Luce and Briton Hadden managed to borrow in 1922.

There is no doubt that Luce was the business genius of the two young founders of the enterprise, even though one of the small intramural controversies at Time Inc. has to do with the exact nature of each of their contributions. One story has it that since both Luce and Briton Had-

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den were journalists by training, they planned to alternate annually in the jobs of editor and business manager, and that initially they flipped a coin to determine who would serve as first editor. The coin may well have been tossed, but it is clear from Noel Busch's biography of Briton Hadden* that the latter worked exclusively as managing editor during *Time*'s first three years while Luce, apart from writing the Religion Department, confined himself to being the magazine's full-time business manager. If Hadden was even one-tenth the editorial genius Busch makes him out to have been, then it is yet another testament to Luce's business acumen that he kept the financial management of *Time* in his own hands and left the "creative" side largely to Hadden.

The young Henry Luce strikes one as a somewhat drab, prematurely middle-aged man when compared to Briton Hadden. The latter was peculiarly a child of the American 20's. Like Scott Fitzgerald, he was an athlete *manqué*; like Harold Ross, he was a bit of a philistine; like H. L. Mencken, he cultivated and parlayed his eccentricities into a legend. While the conception and original prospectus for *Time* was the joint product of the two partners, the magazine's early editorial form and contents would appear to have been largely Hadden's work. Moreover, he invented the notorious *Timestyle*, with its double-barreled adjectives and inverted syntax. Unquestionably, he brought great zest and zaniness to his work. He was not, for example, above writing fake letters to the editors to stir up false controversy, or—with Luce's approval—of putting the name "Peter Matthews" (after the two apostles) on the masthead as a blind for the editor of the Religion Department.

On the business side, however, Luce was in firm command. In order to save the costs of telegraphing copy to the printer in Cleveland, cut down office expenses, and centralize distribution, Luce moved *Time*'s headquarters to Cleveland in 1925. (Later, of course, they were moved back to New York.) Financially, that move put the magazine over the hump and eventually into the black. To be sure, Hadden, a Brooklyn boy, almost went out of his mind in the Middle West, so uncongenial did he find the region's pace and people. Sinclair Lewis's *Babbitt* had been published only three years before, and one of Hadden's few delights was Babbitt-spotting on the streets of Cleveland. Interestingly enough, the Middle West caused Luce no pain. Not only was he rather comfortable among the Babbitts; there is reason to believe that he was turning into something of a high-level Babbitt himself. "I have no use for a man who lies in bed after nine o'clock in the morning," he is supposed to have said. "In Cleveland," Noel Busch writes, "the Luces occupied a conventional suburban house, moved in country-club circles, and took a lively and enthusiastic part in the life of the community."

After Hadden's death, Luce continued for some time to concentrate on business affairs. At the beginning of the Depression in 1930, he launched *Fortune*, a magazine dedicated to the thesis that "business is obviously the greatest single denominator of interest among the active leading citizens of the U.S.A. . . . the distinctive expression of the American genius." Another side to Luce's interest in business, one perhaps more interesting than the pronouncements of any prospectus, is revealed in the fact that the original name for *Fortune*—dropped, one imagines, because it was simply too naked—was *Power*.

In 1932, Luce bought a trade publication called *Architectural Forum*, and brought it into the growing Time Inc. empire.† At the time, he was fascinated by architecture, and he was growing wealthy enough to indulge his interests. In fact, he could soon afford to indulge other people's interests; in 1935, at the insistence of Mrs. Clare Boothe Brokaw, who was to become the second Mrs. Luce, he bought *Life*, the old humor magazine, and entered the field of photo-journalism. The early *Life* was Luce's only serious business failure—the failure consisting of having underestimated the magazine's immediate and immense popularity. Between its first issue in 1936, and 1939, the year the magazine began to show a profit, circulation far outdistanced advertising revenues, and it cost Luce roughly $5 million to keep *Life*, in the words of *Time*'s editors, "from dying of success." Meanwhile, the rest of Time Inc. just kept on growing. In 1939, with *Life* now out of the red, Luce announced a reorganization of his corporation; from now on, each of his publications would have its own editor and publisher. He himself took on the title of Editorial Director, declaring he had had "plenty of fun (and profit) as an entrepreneur," but was now ready to slip back into the role of journalist.

III

BEFORE TURNING to Luce the journalist-editor, however, it is necessary to discuss the ideological baggage he brought to that career. Luce the ideologist, in turn, is closely connected to Luce the businessman, for it is evident that without his business success Henry Luce woud have had neither the platform nor, probably, the confidence necessary to the ideologist. It seems that nothing does so much to bolster the ideological instinct of Americans as success in

* *Briton Hadden. A Biography of the Co-founder of* Time, Farrar, Straus & Cudahy, 1949.

† Twenty years later, Time Inc. bought *House & Home*, another magazine in the same field. In 1964, however, *Architectural Forum* was discontinued and *House & Home* was sold to McGraw-Hill, Inc. The *Forum* was an exceedingly good magazine, but Luce's attitude—typical of modern corporation executives—toward his corporation's losing enterprises was similar to that of the Spartans to their malformed children: he buried them.

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business, especially among magazine publishers.

"America's great achievement," Henry Luce once said, "has been business." A sense of self-significance, largely derived from his own success in business (America's highest endeavor, after all), was unmistakable in Luce, and most openly manifested itself in his high regard for a free enterprise economy. The six points of "Editorial Bias" in the original prospectus for *Time* included: "(2) A general distrust of the present tendency toward increasing interference by government." This, to be sure, is little more than a safe shibboleth of the 20's, but Luce retained his personal belief in the point throughout his life. After John F. Kennedy lunched with Luce and the editors of *Time* and *Life* in New York, the late President (according to Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., in *A Thousand Days*) remarked:

> I like Luce. He is like a cricket, always chirping away. After all, he made a lot of money through his own individual enterprise so he naturally thinks that individual enterprise can do everything. I don't mind people like that. They have earned the right to talk that way. After all, that's the atmosphere in which I grew up. My father is the same way. But what I can't stand are all the people around Luce who automatically agree with everything he has to say.

If success in business brought out the ideological instinct in Henry Luce, his strong religious impulse served to deepen it. He was, of course, the son of missionaries; he grew up in the atmosphere of a mission; and he attended Yale at a time when that university was characterized, according to Santayana, by a kind of muscular Christianity and undirected moral enthusiasm.* Such a background helps to explain Luce's lifelong habit of quoting Scripture. In *Witness*, Whittaker Chambers, for years an employee of Time Inc., recalls that before his ordeal at the Hiss-Chambers trial he was fortified by Luce with a quotation from the Gospel of St. John.

In 1965, Luce personally reviewed Teilhard de Chardin's *The Future of Man* in the pages of *Life*, and found that author's mystical Christianity to be congenial to his own views. Those views were so unshakable that they were immune to the impact of modern theological debates, which Luce appears to have followed with great interest. On the "God is Dead" controversy, for example, he struck a characteristically peremptory tone in a letter to a friend: "The real question about God is, of course, 'whose God?' After all the argumentation is done, I believe that God revealed in the Scriptures is, quite simply, God; and therefore, not only living, but the creator and source of all life." Speaking to his assembled employees, he once remarked that the evolution of the modern journalist—a figure Malcolm Muggeridge has likened to a piano player in a brothel—began with the medieval troubadours. "Be ye troubadours of the Lord," he thereupon invoked his staff. There can be little question but that for Luce, journalism was at least in part a form of missionary work.

* "It seemed to me at Yale," Santayana wrote in his autobiography, "as if enthusiasm were cultivated for its own sake, as flow of life, no matter in what direction. It meant intoxication, not choice. You were not taught to attain anything capable of being kept, a treasure to be laid up in heaven. You were trained merely to succeed. And in order to be sure to succeed, it was safer to let the drift of the times dictate your purpose. Make a strong pull and a long pull and a pull all together for the sake of togetherness. Then you will win the race. A young morality, a morality of preparation, of limbering up. 'Come on, fellows,' it cried, 'Let's see who gets there first. Rah, rah, rah! Whoop-her-up! Onward, Christian Soldier!' "

THE QUALITIES of the business ideologue and the missionary are nicely combined in an essay Luce wrote just before America's entry into World War II. Entitled "The American Century" and published in February 1941, that essay also provides some strong clues as to the place of America in Henry Luce's personal cosmology. Born an American, but having spent the first fifteen years of his life in China without once setting foot in this country, Luce had every opportunity to construct a fantasy-image of the United States. His attitude toward the nation resembles that of a convert to his new-found religion; his interest in America was almost proprietary and his patriotism bordered on the chauvinistic. "I was never disillusioned with or by America," he once wrote, "but I was from my earliest manhood dissatisfied with America. America was not being as great and as good as I knew she could be, as I believed with every nerve and fiber God Himself had intended her to be."

Never one for small talk, Luce was fond of thinking in grandiose terms. Although "The American Century" is ostensibly devoted to the issue of whether American foreign policy in the early 40's should be isolationist or interventionist, the essay soon turns to the subject of America's destiny. Luce was an interventionist, but the reasons for his position are curious. Surprisingly enough, the specter of Hitler has no real prominence in his essay; at no time does Luce broach the possibility that America might have limited aims in the war, such as helping to destroy Nazism. According to Luce, the purpose of the war is "to defend and even to promote, encourage, and incite so-called democratic principles throughout the world." Not that there weren't sufficient problems at home—though in Luce's mind all of these seemed to reduce themselves to the name Franklin Delano Roosevelt:

> We start into this war with huge government debt, a vast bureaucracy, and a whole generation of young people trained to look to the government as the source of all life. The party in power is the one which for long years has been most sympathetic to all manner of socialist

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doctrine and collectivist trends. The President of the United States has continually reached for more and more power, and he owes his continuation in office today largely to the coming of the war. Thus, the fear that the United States will be driven to a national socialism, as a result of cataclysmic circumstances and contrary to the will of the American people, is an entirely justifiable fear.

Nevertheless, the argument of "The American Century" continues, the important point to grasp about World War II is "simply that the complete opportunity of leadership is *ours*." Noting that Americans have seemed unable to accommodate themselves spiritually and practically to the fact that their nation is the most powerful in the 20th-century world, Luce writes that "they have failed to play their part as a world power—a failure which has had disastrous consequences for themselves and for all mankind. And the cure is this: to accept wholeheartedly our duty and our opportunity as the most powerful and vital nation in the world and in consequence to exert upon the world the full impact of our influence, *for such purposes as we see fit and by such means as we see fit*." (Italics mine, J.E.) Even though, "Under Franklin Delano Roosevelt we ourselves have failed to make democracy work successfully," it is evident that "Our only chance now to make it work is in terms of a vital international economy and in terms of an international moral order."

Toward the end of the essay, Luce points to four areas in which the vision of the American Century can be realized. The first is economic: "It is for America and for America alone to determine whether a system of free economic enterprise—an economic order compatible with freedom and progress—shall not prevail in this century." The second is technological: "Closely akin to the purely economic area and yet quite different from it, there is the picture of an America which will send out through the world its technical and artistic skills." Thirdly, there is the purely Christian ideal of the Good Samaritan: "It is the manifest duty of this country to undertake to feed all the people of the world who as a result of this worldwide collapse of civilization are hungry and destitute—*all of them, that is, whom we can from time to time reach consistently with a very tough attitude toward all hostile governments*." (Italics mine, J.E.) Finally, there is that loose equipage of convictions known as "Americanism": "But all this is not enough. All this will fail and none of it will happen unless our vision of America as a world power includes a passionate devotion to great American ideals."

What "The American Century" proposes, then, is a program for a more perfect world—on Henry Luce's terms. Has anyone, I wonder, felt the shock of recognition? Although written twenty-six years ago, this program, moral pretensions and all, constitutes the essence of current American foreign policy—a fact perhaps more widely recognized around the world than in the United States. What it holds out, quite simply, is the promise of American technological and economic resources to any nation which will roughly approximate our economic system, share our political attitudes, and adopt our ideology.

Luce was apparently able to reconcile his optimistic conception of America's role in the world with his profound adherence to Presbyterianism, according to which man is a lowly sinner to whom worldly success can be of no avail. Infusing all his activities with religious fervor, he seemed to be the very embodiment of what Max Weber called the Protestant ethic. It is fascinating, but ultimately futile, to speculate about the inner turmoil that may have attended his outward serenity. We may leave it at the following comment by T. S. Matthews, who was with *Time* for twenty-four years, six of them as principal editor:

> As a fervently patriotic American he had an almost religious faith in competition and a striving belief that it was a man's duty, like his country's, to win. He must have been daily (and nightly) torn by the struggle with these apocalyptic beasts [his religion and his patriotism], these irreconcilable and mutally hostile convictions. Although his devotion to the Presbyterian creed was not always apparent during office hours, and was certainly not allowed to shackle his progress as a press tycoon, it was there, it was a part of him, and it made both himself and his success more interesting. I finally decided that what most drew me to Luce and made me feel that we had something in common—and has kept me fond of him even when I didn't like him—was his guilty conscience.

IV

SHORTLY AFTER the publication of "The American Century," Quincy Howe, the radio commentator and journalist, called Luce "the most influential editor in the United States." Here are Howe's reasons, such as they are, for this high estimate:

> Because Henry Luce is primarily a great *editor*, his genius lies more in anticipating public trends than in actually leading the public one way or the other. For the great editor is an advance sounding board of public opinion rather than the crusader who molds public opinion. The great editor does not create a trend; he anticipates it. The importance of Mr. Luce's article does not lie in the fact that it is going to persuade a reluctant public to share its author's convictions. Its importance lies in the fact that Mr. Luce has that sixth sense—of which he himself may be quite unaware—of thinking a few weeks ahead of the public. There, rather than in his gift for writing, for publicity, for organization, lies the secret of his success.

Before going any further, I had better say that I am in almost total disagreement with Mr.

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Howe's definition of greatness in an editor. Spotting trends in public opinion, is, it seems to me, only a small part of the editorial task; what is more important, what defines a magazine editor's excellence, is how he deals with a given trend. The great editor's real ability, I should say, lies in extracting and clarifying the true issues embedded in the amorphous welling of mass public opinion; in introducing new and useful ideas to his readers; and in *directing* public opinion toward rational thought and action, or even in the service of a cause.

If one applies these standards rather than Quincy Howe's, can one still consider Henry Luce a great editor? The answer to this question involves a close look at Luce's magazines, especially *Time,* to determine whether they have guided public opinion or merely reflected it. In taking such a look one must be prepared to question what Dwight Macdonald has described as one of the enduring tenets of the liberal myth, the conviction that the main trouble with our press is that it is a mere mouthpiece for the reactionary views of its owners. It is, of course, true that Luce qualifies beautifully as a reactionary; most of his ideas were terribly dated, and there is no evidence that he ever changed his mind about anything fundamental. And yet his magazines—especially *Time,* the crown jewel in his empire—have not grown more reactionary as they have grown older and more powerful. If anything, it has been the other way around. If *Time* can be said to have had an ideological line all through the years, that line, upon investigation, turns out to have been neither so straight nor so firm as one might have imagined. There have, in fact, been multiple lines —a labyrinth, a veritable maze of lines.

It is, however, beyond doubt that *Time* has always been strongly opinionated. The biases of the magazine are sometimes excused on the ground that Luce never advanced any pretenses as to its objectivity. This is true, but only in part. While the original prospectus for *Time* claimed the "the editors recognize that complete neutrality on public questions and important news is probably as undesirable as it is impossible . . .," it also stated, "No article will be written to prove any special case."

No one can deny that *Time* frequently pleaded a "special case" in line with Luce's convictions. *Time,* as T. S. Matthews said, was not only Luce's invention but his property. As business head of the corporation, he had the final say on every important business decision; and his role as editorial director was an analogous one. When Luce announced his retirement in 1964, he declared that editorial decisions would now be made by others. Yet Herbert R. Mayes, a personal friend and a former president of the McCall Corporation, records the following exchange with Luce:

> "But if the editors now decide to support candidate A for President, and you are for candidate B, which candidate will the magazine support?"
>
> "That's simple," Mr. Luce responded after a long interval of a tenth of a second. "They will support candidate B."

UP TO THE day of his death, then, Henry Luce exercised a pervasive influence over *Time.* This is not to say that he dictated his personal line on every item that appeared in the magazine, from a review of a biography of Marcel Proust to the latest Jerry Lewis movie (though one may well wonder how many peripheral items were written to please the Boss). But every substantive stand that *Time* ever took was, above all, the stand of Henry Luce. In a way that applies to few other recent publishers, Luce turned his magazines into his personal diaries.

To be sure, not all of Luce's opinions were of equal intensity. But when he held a strong conviction in one area it tended to affect strongly his views in other spheres. He evidently embraced the Arab proverb, "The enemy of my friend is my enemy and the enemy of my enemy is my friend." This tendency is vividly illustrated by Luce's strong approval of Dwight Eisenhower and *Time*'s coverage of the 1952 Presidential election campaign.

There is reason to believe that Luce bore Stevenson no very great malice until the latter was chosen to oppose Eisenhower in 1952. In a *Time* cover story on Stevenson before he had become a Presidential candidate, he is cited as a governor dedicated to "a more hopeful and dynamic proposition: that the U.S. is not a static pattern but an experiment, among other things—in good government." Once a candidate, however, he became prey to the furies of Lucean journalism.* Thus, after the 1952 Democratic convention the readers of *Time* were informed that Stevenson had "never so much as slapped the wrist of the Cook County Democratic organization, the most corrupt and powerful of existing big-city machines." In a later cover story on Richard Nixon —"a good-looking, dark-haired young man, with a manner both aggressive and modest . . . a fine TV manner, an attractive family, a good war record, deep sincerity and religious faith, a Horatio Alger-like career," etc.—one discovers that Stevenson's English is "more polished than plain." In the September 1, 1952 issue of *Time* Eisenhower is depicted as offering "the kind of shrewd analysis . . which the U.S. seldom hears from its officials . . .," while Stevenson is up in Wisconsin, spending "hours loafing." Cover stories on Eisenhower carried caption lines such as "E pluribus unum" and (a quote) "Free government is the political expression of a deeply felt religious

* See Ben H. Bagdikian's analysis of *Time*'s coverage of the '52 and '56 Presidential elections in "*Time,* the Weekly Newsmagazine" in the *New Republic* of February 23, 1959.

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faith"; a Stevenson cover, however, posed the question: "Does he speak for the American people?" The answer, needless to say, was by and large: No.

THE BIAS of the '52 campaign coverage extended all the way down to photography. Ben H. Bagdikian points out that in the thirteen issues published during the campaign, *Time* printed twenty-one photographs of Eisenhower, all generally attractive: shaking hands, smiling that winning smile, looking altogether earnest and mellow and wise. But during the same period there appeared only thirteen photographs of Stevenson; two of them were thirty years old, and of the remainder four showed him in such unfelicitous poses as eating, drinking, and frowning. (This, incidentally, lends credence to the rumor that when going out on an assignment *Time* photographers ask only one question of the editors: "Good guy or bad guy?")

Luce's Republicanism even affected *Time*'s depictions of the American mood, which generally turned out to be more serene under Republican than Democratic administrations. In the issue of March 10, 1952, here is how Americans are described as paying their taxes under the Truman administration:

> This week, once again, the American taxpayer . . . was working over his income tax return. He did not do the job happily. . . . The blow, in full and crushing measure, now lands each March 15 on the chin of a fellow named John Q.

But by April 18, 1955, under the Eisenhower administration, taxpayers seem to have become not only accustomed to, but almost joyous about, their lot:

> . . . 60 million Americans have by this week signed their 1954 income tax forms. . . . They did this, wonderful to tell, without riots or protest. . . . It has become more and more unfashionable to criticize the income tax level.

The same kind of bias, though more subtly expressed, can be found in the following two descriptions of airport scenes. Given the fact that they are ostensibly describing the same rather commonplace act of debarking from a plane, they could hardly be more different in tone:

> As the plane landed, the familiar bony face, the hawk nose, the mustache, the Homburg, were framed in a cabin window. The plane, the President's *Independence,* rolled to a stop at the Military Air Transport Service terminal in Washington, and the most controversial [a word simply meaning "unpopular" in *Time* language] figure in international politics [Dean Acheson] came down the ramp. (January 8, 1951)
>
> * * *
>
> A tall, sunburned man in a straw hat climbed out of a small plane at the Syracuse airport last week, and with a trim, grey-haired woman hurrying along beside him, made for the airport waiting room. No one recognized Mr. & Mrs. John Foster Dulles as they crossed the crowded lobby, sat down at the lunch counter, and ordered ice-cream sodas. (August 13, 1951)

The Homburg versus the Ice Cream Soda—who would hesitate to choose between them? The Acheson story ends on a particularly strident note, asking whether the then Secretary of State constitutes so great a political liability as to be a "national danger."

Sometimes, to be sure, *Time* has found targets that deserved its enmity; the magazine's early stand against Senator Joseph McCarthy is certainly to Luce's credit. In the issue of October 22, 1951, the junior Senator from Wisconsin was roundly attacked; indeed, he was even worked over pretty well on the cover, which carried the caption: "DEMAGOGUE McCARTHY, Does he deserve well of the Republic?" (The answer to *Time* cover questions, it seems, is almost invariably negative.) Not only in this particular issue, but at almost every opportunity *Time*'s editors scorned McCarthy's destructive antics as, among other things, a "national disgrace." But *Time*'s memory is short; what is said one week may bear little relation to what was said in the past or will be said in the future; the current issue is *the* issue. Thus, while *Time* thoroughly excoriated McCarthy and McCarthyism in October 1951, a cover story on Acheson, nine months earlier, had stated that "A lot of the charges that the State Department had housed party-liners and homosexuals had obviously stuck"; and, "The Acheson group [in State] (which included, among others, Alger Hiss) had held various attitudes toward Russia, none of them unfriendly." And ten months *after* the exposé of McCarthy, a cover story on Richard Nixon made no mention whatever of the latter's use of McCarthyite smear tactics to defeat Jerry Voorhis for Congress and, later, Helen Gahagan Douglas for the Senate.

As one might suspect from the above attacks on both McCarthy and Acheson, Luce's own attitude toward the dangers of Communism was not unambiguous. He could be open-minded enough to remark to Emmet John Hughes: "I don't *care* how my editors add up their facts and omens. I just don't *feel* the Soviets bringing on world war. In the 30's I *felt* it—surely—with the Nazis. The Communists? Damn it, no." At other times, he could reveal a remarkable lack of sophistication in this area. In *Witness,* Whittaker Chambers tells of an evening he spent with Luce and an unnamed European. When the subject of Communism and the Hiss case entered the conversation, Luce demonstrated his naivete by saying to Chambers: "By any Marxian pattern of how classes behave, the upper class should be for you and the lower classes should be against you. But it is the upper class that is most violent against you.

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How do you explain that?" Shortly afterward, incidentally, there occurs one of the most moving passages in Chambers's strange book. In it Luce shows that at times he could achieve a depth of humaneness seldom to be found in his publications. The passage occurs after the European has left:

> Alone, we sat facing each other across a low table. Neither of us said anything. He studied my face for some time as if he were trying to read the limits of my strength. "The pity of it is," he said at last, "that two men, able men, are destroying each other in this way."

On the Soviet Union generally, Luce tended to reflect rather than direct public opinion. Like almost everyone else, *Time* was glad to have Stalin's troops on our side in World War II; in the 50's, like almost everyone else, including many American intellectuals, the magazine was rather crudely anti-Communist; in the 60's it cooled its anti-Communist zeal—once again, like almost everyone else.

Luce's and *Time*'s line, then, cannot be described as simply anti-liberal. If one wished to "keep score" one could say that Luce and the liberal community found common ground on the following causes: the fight against Fascism, the United Nations, world law, and the civil-rights movement, at least in its more respectable manifestations. They were opposed in their assessments of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Dean Acheson, both of whom Luce fervently despised, and of Harry Truman, whom he simply could not abide. In the *Time* story of Truman's firing of General Douglas MacArthur (April 23, 1951), there appears a passage that is less interesting for what it has to say about the two combatants than for what it has to say about the sympathies and temperament of Henry Luce:

> Seldom had a more unpopular man fired a more popular one. Douglas MacArthur was the personification of the big man, with the many admirers who look to a great man for leadership, with the few critics who distrust a big man's dominating ways. Harry Truman was almost a professional little man, with the admirers who like the little man's courage, with the many critics who despise a little man's inadequacies.

BUT THE ONE subject on which Luce seemed to depart completely from reality was China. "Luce was stubborn and headstrong," T. S. Matthews has written, "but facts and logic could usually persuade him; on this issue alone he went beyond the bounds of reason." His view of China doubtless owed something to his love for the country in which he had been born and brought up, something to his loyalty to Chiang Kai-shek, and something to his capacity for wishful thinking. It has even been suggested that he shared the dream of his missionary parents and wished to Christianize China. That, of course, is a dubious speculation, but after the Communists gained control of the country, Luce's attitude toward China did resemble that of a man advocating a Holy War. Not only was he blind to the brutalities and ineptitude of his friend Chiang Kai-shek, but he almost seemed to take a positive delight in the better organized—and hence larger-scale—brutalities and ineptitudes of China's Communist leadership:

> Two out of every three able men in Canton are unemployed. In other cities the problem is swelled by thousands of rural refugees, who have lost their means of support in the land reform. Whole classes of merchants and professionals like lawyers, brokers, and jewelers are idle: their functions have simply vanished. In Shanghai, Tientsin, Hankow, Chungking, Foochow, and Swatow, thousands of shops and factories have gone bankrupt. Shopping centers in almost every big city in China now seem lifeless and deserted.
>
> That, last week, was China under the rule of a mob of Communist soldiers, politicians, and intellectuals. (June 18, 1951)

In the Luce-*Time* view, the proper policy of the United States toward China was to stir up more of the above: "China's Red masters may be in for plenty of trouble," the magazine reported in the summer of 1951, "(and if the U.S. chooses, it can increase that trouble)." As far as I know, Luce never openly advocated an invasion of China; it seems he hoped that one day the Communists would simply throw up their hands and go away. As late as January 1967, he was apparently still hoping. In a cover story entitled "China in Chaos" and dealing with the power struggle among the Chinese leaders and the activities of the Red Guards, *Time* reported: "To many observers in both the West and the East, it seemed as if China were reaching the final stages of the legendary dance of the scorpion—just before it stings itself to death." "The Great Revolution," the story added, "had clearly begun to devour itself." Moreover, anyone who has ever proposed that the reality of a Communist government in China be acknowledged has been bitterly put down. In 1953, when the *New Statesman* suggested that the Chinese Communists be given a seat on the Security Council, so that "the cement that holds the Stalinite empire so rigidly together might begin to flake away," *Time* rejoined that the *New Statesman* "inhabits a pink cloud all its own."

It is safe to say, then, that Henry Luce's magazines have done more than their share to contribute to the mystification and general hysteria about Communist China. "And the Chinese leadership," Oscar Gass has written,* "now tells its people another fundamental thing—a thing not to the credit of any of the sons of man. *No country helps China.*" For which Time Inc., among others, is entitled to take a bow.

* "China, Russia & the U.S.," COMMENTARY, March 1967.

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As one moves away from politics, *Time*'s "line" becomes harder to discern. In its coverage of the arts, for example, the magazine has been fairly catholic in its interests and tastes. Sometimes, it is true, the Books section has been used to support the political views of the magazine—as when a recent review of *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell* turned out to be little more than an attack on Russell's present politics. But it is also true that *Time*'s cultural departments have occasionally differed from the rest of the magazine in permitting the individual voice of a single writer to emerge—as in the days when James Agee was writing movie criticism and when Louis Kronenberger was the magazine's drama critic. One reason for this is that critical judgment in the arts is by its very nature resistant to a collective line and to collective journalism. Luce's indifference to most areas of culture may well be another reason; insofar as one can discover, he had no great interest in secular literature, visual art, music, or drama. He may have allowed his critics their own points of view for the simple reason that he did not believe in the power of art to move men's minds.

Yet no artist is honored by a *Time* cover story unless he meets one of two criteria: he must either be financially successful or make extraordinarily good copy (preferably both). In literature, recent *Time* cover-story subjects have included such disparate types as Herman Wouk (1955), James Gould Cozzens (1957), Boris Pasternak (1958), Yevgeny Yevtushenko (1962), James Baldwin (1963), and Phyllis McGinley (1965). Slowly developing talent and hard-won achievement in the arts have never been among *Time's* excessive concerns; flashiness and the flat dead level of the "interesting" have always been. In the mid-50's the Luce publications thus latched on with great excitement to the antics of the Beat Generation. Even now they are said to employ a woman who serves as their connection to the American avant garde, such as it is, and whose job is to ferret out and report on the more exotic goings-on in the artistic underground.

To return now to our original question: was Luce a great editor-journalist? Was he a missionary or Muggeridge's "piano player in a brothel"? Did he guide public opinion or merely reflect it? As must be obvious by now, the answer is necessarily a mixed one. While the spirit of the missionary ran deep in Luce, it was frequently in conflict with the spirit of the businessman-journalist, which (China always excepted) more often than not won out. Luce's stand in the 1964 Presidential election is a case in point. One of his deepest commitments, surely, was to the Republican party, but he failed to support Barry Goldwater. It may well have been that Goldwater's Republicanism was too much even for Henry Luce, though the two men probably agreed on a number of fundamental issues. But it may also have been the case that the businessman-journalist in Luce, sensing which way the wind was blowing, managed to still the voice of the journalist-missionary. Again always excepting China, Luce seems to have had a nice sense of how far he could go without discrediting his magazines in the eyes of the general public. Whatever his missionary impulse, Luce always managed to keep that piano handy.

V

Though Henry Luce was something less than a complete tyrant who imposed a monolithic line on *Time*, a subtle totalitarian influence—to use Norman Mailer's term—has nevertheless been at work on the magazine for years. To discover that influence, one must turn to the editorial practices and organization of *Time*. As Luce and Briton Hadden recognized more than forty-five years ago, the intended audience of *Time* lacked the "time" properly to inform itself of what was going on in the world—and time, as they say, is money. But they also recognized that it wasn't enough simply to inform people; in the process they had to be entertained as well. These insights led to *Time*'s standard practice of dramatizing the news, making of every little item a short story whose point and purpose cannot be mistaken. "I am," Luce once allowed, "all for titillating trivialities. I am all for the epic touch. I could almost say that everything in *Time* should be either titillating or epic or starkly, super-curtly, factual."

But to titillate and apply the epic touch—let that "starkly, super-curtly, factual" go for a moment—required talent, as Luce and Hadden were well aware, and talent of a kind that was likely to be expensive. In fact, *Time*'s first foreign news editor, an Englishman named Thomas J. C. Martyn, was hired at a larger salary than that of either of the magazine's two founders. Luce's magazines were among the first on which the editorial budget was not slighted. He might exhort his employees to be "troubadours of the Lord," but the rewards which Time Inc. conferred upon its editors were by no means confined to the afterlife.

"You get what you pay for," to quote another business maxim, and the talent that has gone through the mill at Time Inc. has been of a very high order. The phenomenon of intellectuals who have worked for Henry Luce constitutes an interesting chapter in the 20th-century history of that class. Besides Agee and Kronenberger, the roll call of Luce's employees at one time or another included Stephen Vincent Benet, Archibald MacLeish, John O'Hara, J. K. Galbraith, Theodore H. White, Alfred Kazin, John Chamberlain, Daniel Bell, Whittaker Chambers, Dwight Macdonald, John Hersey, William Schlamm, and Robert Cantwell. Edmund Wilson probably had this phe-

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nomenon in mind when he once called Luce one of the "two great enemies of literary talent in our time" (Hollywood was the other). Hadden's biographer, Noel Busch, is by no means a hostile critic of *Time*, but he makes a similar, if more moderate, assessment when he states that "writers of strongly personalized talent rarely found the medium much to their taste." It is interesting to note that, despite Time Inc.'s various stylistic innovations and all the talent that has been lodged there over the years, perhaps the only genuine work of art produced under the corporation's auspices has been Agee's *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*. Written originally for *Fortune*, it never appeared there, presumably because it was considered altogether too uneven and complex for that magazine's readers.

It is a safe bet that few of the writers who have gone to work for *Time* started out with the assumption that they would spend many years there. One imagines that they planned to write "on the side" while taking home those hefty Luce paychecks, and dreamed of an early day when the recognition and rewards due their own work would allow them to quit *Time*. But, as is often the case with writers who in an analogous fashion decide to turn out potboilers to finance their masterpieces, it seldom worked out that way; they tended to get caught up in the system.

T. S. Matthews and Whittaker Chambers are characteristic instances. Matthews came to *Time* from the *New Republic*. Starting out as a part-time book reviewer who for the most part worked at home, he ended up, twenty-four years later, as principal editor: "My work week was then about seventy hours, packed into five days." Chambers also started out as a *Time* book reviewer. Over the years he rose to Senior Editor, and at one time he was in charge of thirteen sections of *Time*. He called it an invaluable experience, though "it was somewhat like working directly behind a buzz saw, chewing metal faster than the eye can follow and throwing off an unremitting shower of sharp and shining filings." During this period, Chambers and an assistant "ended our week at four o'clock in the morning after having worked for thirty-six hours, almost without stopping and wholly without sleep. We kept up the pace by smoking five or six packs of cigarettes and drinking thirteen or fourteen cups of coffee a day."

How was Luce able to get such Sisyphean labors from his employees? There was, of course, the money—for example, within nine years Chambers saw his salary raised roughly sixfold, to the extraordinary (for 1948) figure of almost $30,000. But money wasn't the whole story. Even those who came to *Time* with stark cynicism were likely to be infected by the seriousness with which the magazine took itself. Surely no one could have been more cynical about the magazine at the start than T. S. Matthews. As he writes in his autobiography:

> The contrast I felt between the *New Republic* and *Time* was a contrast between scholarly, distinguished men and smart, ignorant boys. The *New Republic* did not exist primarily to call attention to itself; it had the nobler motive (or so it seemed to me) of trying to recall Americans to their better senses. The *New Republic* was a failure. And what was *Time* up to? As far as I could see, *Time* simply wanted to succeed, to get bigger, to get all the readers it could collect by exhibiting its bumptious, impertinent, adolescent self. After it grew up . . . but I couldn't imagine *Time* growing up.

Twenty-odd years later, however, there was Matthews, dead on his feet after a seventy-hour week at *Time*.

LUCE'S HIGH seriousness extended to all his enterprises. In this connection, Dwight Macdonald tells a revealing anecdote. He worked on *Fortune* for six years during the 30's, and in his spare time began editing a little literary magazine. Thinking to impress his boss with his new cultural enterprise, he sent a copy up to Luce. Far from being impressed, Luce felt betrayed. "But Henry," Macdonald said, "you can't expect *Fortune* to be my only interest. I give it a good day's work from nine to five, that's what you pay me for, and it's my business what I do in my spare time." Luce, however, didn't see it that way. "This is," he told his employee, "a twenty-four hour profession, you never know when you may get an idea for us, and if you're all the time thinking of some damn little magazine. . . ."

However unreasoning, this attitude of Luce's undoubtedly contributed greatly to Time Inc.'s success, especially in the case of *Time*. That he was able to secure such great devotion from so many able men is especially impressive in view of the fact that his employees had to forgo much of the pleasure that ordinarily attends a journalist's work. The reasons for going into journalism are usually four in number: (1) ego satisfaction in one form or another; (2) aesthetic satisfaction; (3) money; and (4) a chance to alter the world in some small way. By implementing the editorial practice known as "group journalism," a practice devised by himself and Briton Hadden, and one integral to *Time*, Luce in one swoop did away with reasons (1) and (2).

Group journalism is what it says it is: writing produced not individually but cooperatively by a team composed of writers, researchers, correspondents, and editors. *Newsweek*, which took over the practice from *Time*, has described it in its ideal form:

> Group journalism is a demanding craft which at its best can (and often does) produce journalism of the highest order. Theoretically no one man is master, not even of the coverage of such specialized subjects as medicine, fiscal affairs, or science—no one man, except, that is, for the man at the top of the pyramid; and he,

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in turn is (or should be) strongly susceptible to the advice, background, and judgment of those under him. Thus reporters and correspondents often file vast and meticulously researched reports on a given subject, only to see their labors appear in print as a concentrated distillation of a few hundred words.

In practice, however, group journalism achieves nothing so much as to put the journalistic coverage of an event at several removes from the direct experience of it. Let us assume for a moment that *Time* is planning to do a cover story on the Union of South Africa. The mighty and smooth wheels of group journalism will roll in the following fashion. The magazine's African correspondents will file reports on the country, its research staff will get up all sorts of additional statistical and other factual matter. All the material will then be placed on the desk of the editor assigned to write the story. As like as not, this editor will never have been to South Africa, so his job will call not merely for expository skills but for certain powers of invention as well. One of his tasks will be to lend authenticity to the story—in other words, to belie the fact that it is being written in New York. Our imaginary writer will have to depict South Africa's *veld* and mining towns, neither of which he has ever set eyes on; he will have to describe the faces of politicians on the basis of photographs, and the Afrikaans accent of the Prime Minister, which he has never heard; he will have to insert all manner of facts and statistics, of whose real significance he is ignorant. When he has finished, the country of South Africa will doubtless have taken on a few new dimensions, and everything will be at one substantial remove from reality.

The story will now go to the Senior Editor in charge of international news, who will no doubt want to sharpen it up a little: state the issues somewhat more forcibly, describe at greater length the desolation of the compounds in which the Blacks live, interlard the story with a few more statistics, etc. The story is now at another remove from actuality and ready for the perusal of the Managing Editor. Though the copy should be in pretty good order by this time, the Managing Editor might be in a mood to add a touch or two of his own (give the Prime Minister another wart, lend his smile a slight twist). If the subject is one on which *Time* has a "line," the story will now be sent upstairs—formerly to Luce, now perhaps to Hedley Donovan, his most trusted associate and currently Editor-in-Chief—for further tinkering and yet another distancing from first-hand experience.

At some time during this process, the story will be sent back to Research.* Those facts which have been wrenched out of all shape will have to be modulated somewhat; outright errors will have to be corrected; the various editors' imaginations will have to be forced into some accommodation to the hard information. Finally, the piece will be printed and read and no doubt enjoyed by almost everyone except those who happen to have been in South Africa and know what it is really like; such people are likely to experience a strange, rather queasy feeling.

It is one of the unmistakable signs of writing produced by group journalism that it violates one's personal knowledge of what it describes. Edmund Wilson has made much the same point superbly:

> *Time*'s picture of the world gives us sometimes simply the effect of schoolboy mentalities in a position to avail themselves of a gigantic research equipment; but it is almost always tinged with a peculiar kind of jeering rancor. There is a tendency to exhibit the persons whose activities are chronicled, not as more or less able or noble or amusing or intelligent human beings, who have various ways of being right or wrong, but—because they are presented by writers who are allowed no points of view themselves—as manikins, sometimes cocky, sometimes busy, sometimes zealous, sometimes silly, sometimes gruesome, but in most cases quite infra-human, who make speeches before guinea-pig parliaments, issue commands and move armies of beetles back and forth on bas-relief battle-maps, indulge themselves maniacally in queer little games of sport, science, art, beer-bottle-top collecting or what not, squeak absurd little boasts and complaints, and pop up their absurd little faces in front of the lenses of the Luce photographers, and add up to a general impression that the pursuits, past and present, of the human race are rather an absurd little scandal about which you might find out some even nastier details if you met the editors of *Time* over cocktails. . . .

It should be added that *Time* is not altogether insensible of some of the defects of group journalism. A former editor informs me that, whenever possible, *Time* writers are now sent out on a whirlwind tour (often at lavish expense) of the place they are assigned to write about. But this does not and cannot change the decisive fact that they are allowed no point of view of their own. Nor are their manuscripts ever really free from all sorts of editorial infringement by their superiors. So entrenched is the practice of group journalism at *Time* that Henry Luce himself was prepared to submit to it. T. S. Matthews tells a story of a piece Luce had written about a speech by Charles Lindbergh on isolationism; the piece was, for *Time*, highly unorthodox. In the editorial process, the lead had been lopped off and the rest largely rewritten. "Well," said Luce, upon reading his mangled copy, "quite a lot of it got by."

* For an interesting commentary on the function of the researcher and the newsmagazines' general attitude toward facts, see "There Are 007 Trees in Russia," by Otto Friedrich, in the October 1964 *Harper's*.

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BUT EVEN IF *Time* were to drop group journalism altogether, Wilson's indictment would still stand, for *Time* has all the inherent defects of a mass magazine designed for a mass audience. Among other things, this means that between teaching and delighting its readers, the latter must, wherever possible, be given priority. Not only must the readers all be delighted but they must all be delighted in roughly the same way, for it is the common emblem of the products of mass culture that they treat a heterogeneous audience homogeneously. *Time* is admirably suited to this; the only price it pays is in the coin of reality. "How can *Time* get very close to reality," Dwight Macdonald has written, "when every story has to be tailored and tortured into a little drama, with an angle, a climax, an arresting lead and a 'kicker' at the end?" As a B-movie contorts human experience, snuffing out its complexity and tidying up its loose ends for an audience which has, after all, come primarily to be entertained, so does *Time* magazine: the B-movie of current events and personalities.

But B-movies are usually harmless, because they do not usually deal with real people and events; *Time* does, and is often harmful. P. G. Wodehouse has said, "*Time* is about the most inaccurate magazine in existence. They will write just about anything to be picturesque and amusing." During Wodehouse's internment by the Germans in World War II, *Time* had him, he says, " 'throwing a cocktail party in the jolly old pine woods at Le Touquet' as the German army was sweeping toward Paris." "Can you imagine the bastards inventing an idiotic story like that?" he has asked.* "Apparently everyone believed the story because it has been picked up time and again. It did me a lot of harm twenty years ago, and is still repeated often. It is embedded in the world's folklore—thanks to the inventiveness of one of *Time*'s editors."

A *Time* piece entitled "Of Time & the Rebel" (December 5, 1960), on the subject of Norman Mailer's stabbing of his second wife, provides another illustration of the magazine's capacity for harmful irresponsibility. The piece begins by describing the incident and the background against which it took place, a party at the Mailers' apartment. It reports who was at the party; it describes what they did and talked about; and it tells us why Leonard Lyons left early. But it very quickly gets down to the problem of causation. For it is not enough for *Time* readers to know that a man has done a terrible thing; they must also know why he did what he did—in less than a thousand words, preferably. In this case, *Time* had no great difficulty: it claimed that since *The Naked and The Dead* Mailer's career had been going downhill, his work had been going sour, he hungered for a *succès d'estime*, he had of late become preoccupied with the subject of violence—a list made up of truths, half-truths, quarter-truths, and simple falsehoods—ergo, at the end of the night he walked into his wife's bedroom and stabbed her. This "explanation," of course, denies almost totally Mailer's rich complexity as a writer and human being, and brings him down to the level of the little man who has had a rough day at the office and then comes home to take it out on his wife. The piece also contains the inevitable *Time* "kicker." The last paragraph includes a poignant plea from Mailer that he not be sent to an insane asylum, lest the validity of all his long years of work be thrown in doubt. Whereupon the story concludes with the following sentence: "Not so sure, Magistrate Reuben Levy sent Norman Mailer to Bellevue Hospital for mental observation 'in the public interest.' "

One wonders whether this is what Henry Luce had in mind by the "starkly, super-curtly, factual." One also wonders whether anyone would have the nerve to affix his own name to a piece of writing so clearly malicious in its intent.

This brings us to the subject of the anonymity of *Time* writing, which not only makes it easy to be irresponsible but serves other functions as well. For one thing, it gives an evenness of tone and style to each week's issue, a uniformity to the whole product. It also lends a kind of specious authority to what is being written about, as if the magazine were produced not by insignificant human beings but by an omniscient machine. At present, there is no distinct *Timestyle* in the sense that there was one in Briton Hadden's day, and for some time afterward. "Backward ran sentences until reeled the mind," Wolcott Gibbs noted of that style; now the sentences run forward, though the mind might still reel. Nonetheless, it is still true that "The overwhelming fact about *Time*," as Marshall McLuhan has written, "is its style. It has often been said that nobody could tell the truth in *Time* style." But the truth is one thing, the demands of the product another. What Luce and Hadden in their original prospectus for *Time* called the "complete organization of the news" has actually turned out to be a consummate packaging job. It may be the most artful packaging job in the history of publishing, giving its readers the illusion that by investing a few hours of time they can acquire knowledge of everything of interest that has happened in the world during *the past week*. "*Time*," according to McLuhan, "is a nursery book in which the reader is slapped and kicked alternately. It is full of predigested pap, spooned out with confidential nudges. The reader is never on his own for an instant, but, as though at his mother's knee, he is provided with the right emotions for everything he hears and sees as the pages turn."

It remains to be said, however, that *Time* is in some curious way nearly irresistible. Nor are

* For an account of the injustice done to Mr. Wodehouse in regard to the stories about his collaborating with the Germans, see *The Most of Malcolm Muggeridge*.

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Americans the only people who have succumbed to the charms of Lucean journalism. As *Newsweek* reported in its cover story on Luce: "By last week, in fact, there were at least 50 journals throughout the world that trace their origins to some extent to the ideas first incorporated in *Time*. They run the gamut from the prestigious West German *Spiegel* and France's *Express* to the smudgily similar but eagerly read magazines that appear in some half-dozen newly independent African nations." It is perverse, but apparently true, that the Oxford Don, the Brooklyn mechanic, the Lebanese merchant, the writer of this article, and (with a little training) the African tribal chief are all eager to store up a little information each week about Coptic art, leather lungs, Carnaby Street, NATO, what's doing with Liz and Richard Burton, etc., etc.

What does all this information add up to? It is a question few of us bother to ask ourselves—it is, after all, hardly a pressing one. The answer, of course, is nothing; it all adds up to absolutely nothing. But for Henry Luce's employees the question was not so easy to avoid. After six years as editor of *Time*, T. S. Matthews asked himself: "And what did I accomplish in those six years? Nothing tangible, visible, or lasting, as far as I could see. . . . I was sometimes told that I had 'changed the tone' of *Time*—which I am quite sure I didn't—or at least had left some ephemeral impress on the magazine. I could never see any signs of that myself, much as I should have liked to see them." Ezra Goodman, for years *Time*'s Hollywood correspondent, tells of a colleague who answered the question in less articulate fashion. "Every morning before leaving for work," Goodman reports, "he would throw up."

VI

How did Henry Luce view his own accomplishments? As is to be expected, in judging himself he usually bowed to the spirit of business and the specter of public opinion. ". . . All our publications, all our activities, are successful," he once said. "They are successful not only at the box office, but they are successful also in the opinion of a large part of mankind. This is a considerable consolation for our efforts over the years."

But Luce also had another standard for assessing men and their achievements. Of Douglas MacArthur he once remarked to Emmet John Hughes: "You may not like him, but he meets the test of greatness. He *fills* the living space around him. He cannot be trespassed upon, or toyed with, or subtracted from. Whatever ground he stands on, it is *his*." He probably would have liked to be judged in the same way, and it is a measure of his influence that by and large he was. Writing in *Newsweek*, Hughes said of Luce: "*He* plainly filled the space around him. He made the ground he stood on truly—sometimes defiantly—*his*. And so his life served its sovereign and precise purpose: to make some difference to history." The *New Yorker*'s TV critic, M. J. Arlen, suggested that television could stand more men of the stature of Luce: "One thing you could say for Henry Luce—when you picked up one of his magazines, especially *Time*, you really felt his presence. Think of it—all those pages, pictures, words, long series on snakes and Art, and whatever happened to the Holy Roman Empire, and you felt that presence of this one man." And in the *Saturday Review*, Herbert R. Mayes went so far as to suggest that Luce would have made a "superb President," adding: "I am content, however, that he gave himself to publishing."

There can be no question but that Henry Luce was a man of a certain stature and that he has a place in history. Yet that is something which can be said of villains as well as heroes; it tells us nothing of the worth of a man's achievements. Viewing Luce's life in retrospect, one finds it difficult not to conclude that he accomplished little of positive value and because of this one is filled with an almost overwhelming sense of waste. There was in Luce all that energy, all that religious zeal to do good, and it all came to so little. Through the agency of his magazines, he confused more issues than he clarified, harmed more people than he helped, and contributed more to the Gross National Product than to American culture.

Commenting on Luce's death, the President of the United States declared: "The magazines which bear his stamp are an authentic part of life in America." Since Luce's ardent dream for an "American Century" has soured for so many—both in the United States and abroad—even this well-intended accolade is ambiguous. To be sure, *Time* marches on even after the death of Henry Luce, but when one views his life one is haunted by a line from Shelley's "Ozymandias," a line which in one of his rare introspective moments, Luce himself might have uttered:

"Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"

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IRVING HOWE

THE CULTURE OF MODERNISM

IN THE PAST hundred years we have had a special kind of literature. We call it modern and distinguish it from the merely contemporary; for where the contemporary refers to time, the modern refers to sensibility and style, and where the contemporary is a term of neutral reference, the modern is a term of critical placement and judgment. Modernist literature seems now to be coming to an end, though we can by no means be certain and there are critics who would argue that, given the nature of our society, it cannot come to an end.

The kind of literature called modern is almost always difficult: that is a sign of its modernity. To the established guardians of culture, the modern writer seems willfully inaccessible. He works with unfamiliar forms; he chooses subjects that disturb the audience and threaten its most cherished sentiments; he provokes traditionalist critics to such epithets as "unwholesome," "coterie," and "decadent."

The modern must be defined in terms of what it is not, the embodiment of a tacit polemic, an inclusive negative. Modern writers find that they begin to work at a moment when the culture is marked by a prevalent style of perception and feeling; and their modernity consists in a revolt against this prevalent style, an unyielding rage against the official order. But modernism does not establish a prevalent style of its own; or if it does, it denies itself, thereby ceasing to be modern. This presents it with a dilemma which in principle may be beyond solution but in practice leads to formal inventiveness and resourceful dialectic —*the dilemma that modernism must always struggle but never quite triumph, and then, after a time, must struggle in order not to triumph.* Modernism need never come to an end, or at least we do not really know, as yet, how it can or will reach its end. The history of previous literary periods is relevant but probably not decisive here, since modernism, despite the precursors one can find in the past, is, I think, a novelty in the development of Western culture. What we do know, however, is that modernism can fall upon days of exhaustion, when it appears to be marking time and waiting for new avenues of release.

At certain points in the development of a culture, usually points of dismay and restlessness, writers find themselves affronting their audience, and not from decision or whim but from some deep moral and psychological necessity. Such writers may not even be aware that they are challenging crucial assumptions of their day, yet their impact is revolutionary; and once this is recognized by sympathetic critics and a coterie audience, the avant garde has begun to emerge as a self-conscious and combative group. Paul Goodman writes:

> . . . there are these works that are indignantly rejected, and called not genuine art, but insult, outrage, *blague, fumiste,* willfully incomprehensible. . . . And what is puzzling is not that they are isolated pieces, but some artists persistently produce such pieces and there are schools of such "not genuine" artists. What are they doing? In this case, the feeling of the audience is sound—it is always sound—there *is* insult, wilful incomprehensibility, experiment; and yet the judgment of the audience is wrong—it is often wrong—for this is a genuine art.

Why does this clash arise? Because the modern writer can no longer accept the claims of the world. If he tries to acquiesce in the norms of the audience, he finds himself depressed and outraged. The usual morality seems counterfeit; taste, a genteel indulgence; tradition, a wearisome fetter. It becomes a condition of being a writer that he rebel, not merely and sometimes not at all against received opinions, but against the received ways of doing the writer's work.

A modernist culture soon learns to respect, even to cherish, signs of its division. It sees doubt as a form of health. It hunts for ethical norms through underground journeys, experiments with sensation, and a mocking suspension of accredited values. Upon the passport of the Wisdom of The Ages, it stamps in bold red letters: *Not Transferable.* It cultivates, in Thomas Mann's phrase, "a sympathy for the abyss." It strips man of his systems of belief and his ideal claims, and then proposes the one uniquely modern style of salva-

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tion: a salvation by, of, and for the self. In modernist culture, the object perceived seems always on the verge of being swallowed up by the perceiving agent, and the act of perception in danger of being exalted to the substance of reality. *I see, therefore I am.*

Subjectivity becomes the typical condition of the modernist outlook. In its early stages, when it does not trouble to disguise its filial dependence on the Romantic poets, modernism declares itself as an inflation of the self, a transcendental and orgiastic aggrandizement of matter and event in behalf of personal vitality. In the middle stages, the self begins to recoil from externality and now devotes itself, almost as if it were the world's body, to a minute examination of its own inner dynamics: freedom, compulsion, caprice. In the late stages, there occurs an emptying-out of the self, a revulsion from the wearisomeness of both individuality and psychological gain. (Three writers as exemplars of these stages: Whitman, Virginia Woolf, Beckett.) Modernism thereby keeps approaching—sometimes even penetrating—the limits of solipsism, the view expressed by the German poet Gottfried Benn when he writes that "there is no outer reality, there is only human consciousness, constantly building, modifying, rebuilding new worlds out of its own creativity."

Behind this extreme subjectivity lurks an equally extreme sense of historical impasse, the assumption that something about the experience of our ages is unique, a catastrophe without precedent. The German novelist Herman Hesse speaks about "a whole generation caught . . . between two ages, two modes of life, with the consequence that it loses all power to understand itself and has no standards, no security, no simple acquiescence." Above all, no simple acquiescence.

Whether all of this is true matters not nearly so much as the fact that modernist writers, artists, and composers—Joyce, Kafka, Picasso, Schoenberg—have apparently worked on the tacit assumption that it is true. The modernist sensibility posits a blockage, if not an end, of history: an apocalyptic *cul de sac* in which both teleological ends and secular progress are called into question, perhaps become obsolete. Man is mired—you can take your choice—in the mass, in the machine, in the city, in his loss of faith, in the hopelessness of a life without anterior intention or terminal value. By this late date, these disasters seem in our imaginations to have merged into one.

"On or about December 1910 human nature changed." Through this vivid hyperbole Virginia Woolf meant to suggest that there is a frightening discontinuity between the traditional past and the shaken present; that the line of history has been bent, perhaps broken. Modernist literature goes on the tacit assumption that human nature has indeed changed, probably a few decades before the date given by Mrs. Woolf; or, as Stephen Spender remarks, the circumstances under which we live, forever being transformed by nature, have been so radically altered that people feel human nature to have changed and thereby behave as though it has. Commenting on this notion Spender makes a keen distinction between the "Voltairean I" of earlier writers and the "I" of the moderns:

> The "Voltairean I" of Shaw, Wells, and others acts upon events. The "modern I" of Rimbaud, Joyce, Proust, Eliot's *Prufrock* is acted upon by events. . . . The faith of the Voltairean egoists is that they will direct the powers of the surrounding world from evil into better courses through the exercise of the superior social or cultural intelligence of the creative genius, the writer-prophet. The faith of the moderns is that by allowing their sensibility to be acted upon by the modern experience as suffering, they will produce, partly as the result of unconscious processes, and partly through the exercise of critical consciousness, the idioms and forms of new art.

THE CONSEQUENCES are extreme: a breakup of the traditional unity and continuity of Western culture, so that the decorums of its past no longer count for very much in determining its present, and a loosening of those ties which, in one or another way, had bound it to the institutions of society over the centuries. Not their enemies but art and literature themselves assault the *Gemütlichkeit* of autonomy, the classical balances and resolutions of the past. Culture now goes to war against itself, partly in order to salvage its purpose, and the result is that it can no longer present itself with a Goethean serenity and wholeness. At one extreme there is a violent disparagement of culture (the late Rimbaud) and at the other, a quasi-religion of culture (the late Joyce).

In much modernist literature one finds a bitter impatience with the whole apparatus of cognition and the limiting assumption of rationality. Mind comes to be seen as an enemy of vital human powers. Culture becomes disenchanted with itself, sick over its endless refinements. There is a hunger to break past the bourgeois proprieties and self-containment of culture, toward a form of absolute personal speech, a literature deprived of ceremony and stripped to revelation. In the work of Thomas Mann both what is rejected and what is desired are put forward with a high, ironic consciousness: the abandoned ceremony and the corrosive revelation.

But if a major impulse in modernist literature is a choking nausea before the idea of culture, there is another in which the writer takes upon himself the enormous ambition not to remake the world (by now seen as hopelessly recalcitrant and alien) but to reinvent the terms of reality. I have already quoted Benn's remark that "there is only human consciousness . . . rebuilding new worlds out of its own creativity." In a similar vein, the painter Klee once said that his wish was "not to

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reflect the visible, but to make visible." And Baudelaire: "The whole visible universe is but an array of images and signs to which the imagination gives a place and relative value. . . ." At first glance this sentence reads like something an English Romantic poet or even a good American transcendentalist might have said; but in the context of Baudelaire's experience as a poet—that experience which led him to say that "every man who refuses to accept the conditions of life sells his soul"—it comes to seem the report of a desire to create or perhaps recreate the very grounds of being, through a permanent revolution of sensibility and style, by means of which art could raise itself to the level of white or (more likely) black magic. Rationalistic psychoanalysts might regard this ambition as a substitute gratification of the most desperate kind, a grandiose mask for inner weakness; but for the great figures of literary modernism it is the very essence of their task.

We approach here another dilemma of modernism, which may also in principle be beyond solution but in practice leads to great inventiveness—that, as the Marxist critic Georg Lukacs has charged, *modernism despairs of human history, abandons the idea of a linear historical development, falls back upon notions of a universal* condition humaine *or a rhythm of eternal recurrence, yet within its own realm is committed to ceaseless change, turmoil, and recreation.* The more history comes to be seen as static (in the Marxist idiom: a locomotive stalled in the inescapable present), the more art must take on relentless dynamism.

It is quite as if Hegel's "cunning of reason," so long a motor-force of progress in history, were now expelled from its exalted place and locked into the exile of culture. E. H. Gombrich speaks of philosophies of historical progress as containing "a strong Aristotelian ingredient in so far as they look upon progress as an evolution of inherent potentialities which will follow a predictable course and must reach a predictable summit." Modernist versions of literature do assign to themselves "an evolution of inherent potentialities": there is always the hope for still another breakthrough, always the necessary and prepared-for dialectical leap into still another innovation, always an immanent if by no means gradual progress in the life of a form. But these do not follow "a predictable course" nor can they reach a predictable summit—since the very idea of "predictable" or the very goal of "summit" violates the modernist faith in surprise, its belief in an endless spiral of revolution in sensibility and style. And if history is indeed stalled in the sluggishness of the mass and the imperiousness of the machine, then culture must all the more serve as the agent of a life-enhancing turmoil. The figure chosen to embody and advance this turmoil, remarks Gombrich, is the Genius, an early individualistic precursor of the avant garde creative hero. If there is then "a conflict between a genius and his public," declares Hegel in a sentence which thousands of critics, writers, and publicists will echo through the years, "it must be the public that is to blame . . . the only obligation the artist can have is to follow truth and his genius." Close to romantic theory at this point, modernism soon ceases to believe in the availability of "truth" or the disclosures of "genius." The dynamism to which it then commits itself—and here it breaks sharply from the romantics—becomes not merely an absolute without end but sometimes an absolute without discernible ends.

It is a dynamism of asking and of learning not to reply. The past was devoted to answers, the modern period confines itself to questions. And after a certain point, the essence of modernism reveals itself in the persuasion that the true question, the one alone worth asking, cannot and need not be answered; it need only be asked over and over again, forever in new ways. It is as if the very idea of a question were redefined: no longer an interrogation but now a mode of axiomatic description. We present ourselves, we establish our authenticity by the questions we allow to torment us. "All of Dostoevsky's heroes question themselves as to the meaning of life," writes Albert Camus. "In this they are modern: they do not fear ridicule. What distinguishes modern sensibility from classical sensibility is that the latter thrives on moral problems and the former on metaphysical problems."

A MODERNIST CULTURE is committed to the view that the human lot is inescapably problematic. Problems, to be sure, have been noticed at all times, but in a modernist culture the problematic as a style of existence and inquiry becomes imperious: men learn to find comfort in their wounds. Nietzsche says: "Truth has never yet hung on the arm of an absolute." The problematic is adhered to, not merely because we live in a time of uncertainty when traditional beliefs and absolute standards, having long disintegrated, give way to the makeshifts of relativism—that is by now an old, old story. The problematic is adhered to because it comes to be considered good, proper, and even beautiful that men should live in discomfort. Again Nietzsche:

> Objection, evasion, joyous distrust, and love of irony are signs of health; everything absolute belongs to pathology.

One consequence of this devotion to the problematic, not always a happy consequence, is that in modernist literature there is a turn from truth to sincerity, from the search for objective law to a desire for authentic response. The first involves an effort to apprehend the nature of the universe, and can lead to metaphysics, suicide, revolution, and God; the second involves an effort to discover our demons within, and makes no claim upon the world other than the right to publicize the aggres-

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sions of candor. Sincerity becomes the last-ditch defense for men without belief, and in its name absolutes can be toppled, morality dispersed, and intellectual systems dissolved. But a special kind of sincerity: where for the romantics it was often taken to be a rapid motion into truth, breaking past the cumbersomeness of intellect, now for the modernists it becomes a virtue in itself, regardless of whether it can lead to truth or whether truth can be found. Sincerity of feeling and exact faithfulness of language—which often means a language of fragments, violence, and exasperation—become a ruling passion. In the terrible freedom it allows the modernist writer, sincerity shatters the hypocrisies of bourgeois order; in the lawlessness of its abandonment, it can become a force of darkness and brutality.

Disdainful of certainties, disengaged from the eternal or any of its surrogates, fixated upon the minute particulars of subjective experience, the modernist writer regards settled assumptions as a mask of death, and literature as an agent of metaphysical revolt. Restlessness becomes the sign of sentience, anxiety the premise of responsibility, peace the flag of surrender—and the typewriter a Promethean rock.

Formal experiment may frequently be a consequence or corollary of modernism, but its presence is not a sufficient condition for seeing a writer or a work as modernist. This view of the matter suggests that the crucial factor in the style of a literary movement or period is some sort of inspiriting "vision," a new way of looking upon the world and man's existence; and while such a "vision" will no doubt lead to radical innovations in form and language, there is by no means a direct or invariable correlation. In certain works of literature, such as Thomas Mann's stories, formal experiment is virtually absent, yet the spirit of modernism is extremely powerful, as a force of both liberation and mischief. Correspondingly, there are works in which the outer mannerisms and traits of the modern are faithfully echoed or mimicked but the animating spirit has disappeared—is that not a useful shorthand for describing much of the "advanced" writing of the years after the Second World War? A writer imbued with the spirit of modernism will be predisposed toward experiment, if only because he needs to make visibly dramatic his break from tradition; yet it is an error—and an error indulging the modernist desire to exempt itself from historical inquiry—to suppose that where one sees the tokens of experiment there must also be the vision of the modern.

II

At this point my essay will have to suffer from what Henry James called "a misplaced middle." For I should now speak at some length about the intellectual sources of modernism, especially those major figures in the 19th century who initiated the "psychology of exposure"—that corrosion of appearance in order to break into reality—by means of which old certainties were dislodged and new ones discouraged. I should speak about Frazer and his proclamation of archetypal rhythms in human life, above all, the rhythm of the birth and rebirth of the gods, and the role of myth as a means for reestablishing ties with primal sources of experience in a world deadened by "functional rationality." I should speak about Marx who unmasked—they were all unmaskers, the great figures of the 19th century—Marx who unmasked the fetishism of a commodity-producing society which "resolves personal worth into exchange value" and in which the worker's deed "becomes an alien power . . . forcing him to develop some specialized dexterity at the cost of a world of productive impulses." I should speak about Freud who focuses upon the irremediable conflict between nature and culture, from which there followed the notorious "discontents of civilization," the damage done the life of instinct. I should speak, above all, about Nietzsche, a writer whose gnomic and paradoxical style embodies the very qualities of modernist sensibility. But there is no space, and perhaps by now these are familiar matters. Let me therefore turn to a few topics concerning the formal or distinctly literary attributes of modernism.

The historical development of a literature cannot, for any length of time, be hermetic. It has a history of its own, in which there occurs a constant transformation of forms, styles, and kinds of sensibility. At a given moment writers command an awareness of those past achievements which seem likely to serve them as models to draw upon or deviate from. That, surely, is part of what we mean by tradition: the shared assumptions among contemporaries as to which formal and thematic possibilities of the literary past are "available" to them. Tradition makes itself felt; tradition is steadily remade. Whether they know it or not, writers establish their personal line of vision through a tacit acceptance or rejection of preceding masters. In that sense, then, one can speak of a literary history that is autonomous, with its own continuities of decorum, its own dialectic of strife, its own interweaving of traditions.

Yet over an extended period this literary history must be affected by the larger history of which it is part, the history of mankind. About certain moments in the life of a literature—say, that of 18th-century English poetry—one can say that the power of internal tradition is so enormous that the historian's stress must properly be on the inner logic of form and style: Dryden through Pope, a line of masters whose innovations become tradition. About the 18th-century novel, by contrast, it would be impossible to speak intelligently without noticing the flanking pressures exerted by the society of the time.

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In considering a major revolution in cultural style, it is very hard to know precisely how much causal weight to assign to accumulating modulations in the career of a literary form and how much to the thrust of external historical events as these bear down upon the writers employing that form. I would venture the hypothesis—not a very novel one—that while the internal evolution of a form can significantly affect its nature and dress, there must also occur some overwhelming historical changes for a major new cultural style to flourish. Retrospectively we can see that the shift from neo-Classicism to Romanticism was anticipated by certain late 18th-century poets, but I doubt that a serious literary historian would suppose that transition to be no more than the outcome of an immanent development of literary forms.

In any case, it is when the inner dynamics of a literature and the large-scale pressures of history cross that there follows a new cultural style, in this case modernism. The results are to be observed in at least three areas: modernist writers discard the formal procedures and decorums of their Romantic predecessors; they begin to feel that the very idea of literary tradition is a nuisance, even a tyranny, to be shaken off; and they question the Romantic faith in transcendence through individual ego or through its pantheistic merger with a god-filled universe, as well as the belief held by some Romantics that the poet should actively engage himself in behalf of a militant liberalism. And soon the new writing is signaled by a dramatic change in the social place and posture of the advanced writers.

Forming a permanent if unacknowledged and disorganized opposition, the modernist writers and artists constitute a special caste within or at the margin of society, an avant garde marked by aggressive defensiveness, extreme self-consciousness, prophetic inclination, and the stigmata of alienation. "Bohemia," writes Flaubert, "is my fatherland," bohemia both as an enclave of protection within a hostile society and as a place from which to launch guerrilla raids upon the bourgeois establishment, frequently upsetting but never quite threatening its security. The avant garde abandons the useful fiction of "the common reader"; it demands instead the devotions of a cult. The avant garde abandons the usual pieties toward received aesthetic assumptions; "no good poetry," writes Ezra Pound in what is almost a caricature of modernist dogma, "is ever written in a manner twenty years old." The avant garde scorns notions of "responsibility" toward the audience; it raises the question of whether the audience exists—of whether it should exist. The avant garde proclaims its faith in the self-sufficiency, the necessary irresponsibility, and thereby the ultimate salvation of art.

As a device of exposition I write in the present tense; but it seems greatly open to doubt whether by now, a few decades after World War II, there can still be located in the West a coherent and self-assured avant garde. Perhaps in some of the arts, but probably not in literature. (Only in the Communist countries is there beyond question a combative and beleaguered avant garde, for there, as a rule, the state persecutes or seriously inconveniences modern writers and artists, so that it forces them into a self-protective withdrawal, sometimes an "internal emigration.")

In the war between modernist culture and bourgeois society, something has happened recently which no spokesman for the avant garde quite anticipated. Bracing enmity has given way to wet embraces, the middle class has discovered that the fiercest attacks upon its values can be transposed into pleasing entertainments, and the avant-garde writer or artist must confront the one challenge for which he has not been prepared: the challenge of success. Contemporary society is endlessly assimilative, even if it vulgarizes what it has learned, sometimes foolishly, to praise. The avant garde is thereby no longer allowed the integrity of opposition or the coziness of sectarianism; it must either watch helplessly its gradual absorption into the surrounding culture or try to preserve its distinctiveness by continually raising the ante of sensation and shock—itself a course leading, perversely, to a growing popularity with the bourgeois audience. There remains, to be sure, the option for the serious writer that he go his own way regardless of fashion or cult.

STILL ANOTHER reason should be noticed for the recent breakup of the avant garde. It is very difficult to sustain the stance of a small principled minority in opposition to established values and modes of composition, for it requires the most remarkable kind of heroism, the heroism of patience. Among the modernist heroes in literature, only James Joyce, I would say, was able to live by that heroism to the very end. For other writers, more activist in temper or less firm in character, there was always the temptation to veer off into one or another prophetic stance, often connected with an authoritarian politics; and apart from its intrinsic disasters, this temptation meant that the writer would sooner or later abandon the confinements of the avant garde and try, however delusionally, to reenter the arena of history. Yeats and Pound, on the Right; Brecht, Malraux, and Gide, on the Left: all succumbed to the glamor of ideology or party machines, invariably with painful results. Fruitful as avant-garde intransigence was for literature itself and inescapable as it may have been historically, it did not encourage a rich play of humane feelings. On the contrary, in every important literature except the Yiddish, the modernist impulse was accompanied by a revulsion against traditional modes of 19th-century liberalism and by a repugnance for the commonplace materials of ordinary life (again with the exception of Joyce). Imperiousness of mind and

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impatience with flesh were attitudes shared by Yeats and Malraux, Eliot and Brecht. Disgust with urban trivialities and contempt for *l'homme moyen sensual* streak through many modernist poems and novels.

That modernist literature apprehended with unrivaled power the collapse of traditional liberalism, its lapse into a formalism ignoring both the possibilities of human grandeur and the needs of human survival, is not to be questioned. But especially in Europe, where democracy has never been a common premise of political life to the extent that it has in the United States, this awareness of the liberal collapse frequently led to authoritarian adventures: the haughty authoritarianism of Yeats, with his fantasies of the proud peasant, and the haughty authoritarianism of Malraux, with his visions of the heroic revolutionist. It is by no means possible to pass an unambiguous judgment on the literary consequences, since major writing can be released through the prodding of distasteful doctrine. But once such writers turned to daily politics and tried to connect themselves with insurgent movements, they were well on the way to abandoning the avant-garde position. In retrospect, even those of us committed—however uneasily—to the need for "commitment" will probably have to grant that it would have been much better for both literature and society if the modernist writers had kept themselves aloof from politics. Only Joyce, the greatest and most humane among them, remained pure in his devotion to a kind of literary monasticism; and Beckett, the most gifted and faithful of his disciples, has remained pure in that devotion to this very day.

For brief moments, the avant garde mobilized into groups and communities: Paris, Moscow, Rome during the early 20's. Most of the time, however, these groups broke up almost as fast as they were formed, victims of polemic and schism, vanity and temperament. The metaphor lodged in the term "avant garde" can be seriously misleading if it suggests a structured phalanx or implies that the modernist writers, while momentarily cut off from society at large, were trying to lead great numbers of people into a new aesthetic or social dispensation. Not at all. When we refer to the avant garde we are really speaking of isolated figures who share the burdens of intransigence, estrangement, and dislocation; writers and artists who are ready to pay the costs of their choices. And as both cause and effect of their marginal status, they tend to see the *activity* of literature as self-contained, as the true and exalted life in contrast to the life of contingency and mobs. (When now and again they make a foray into political life, it is mainly out of a feeling that society has destroyed the possibility of a high culture and that to achieve such a culture it is necessary to cleanse or bleed society.) Joyce demands a reader who will devote a lifetime to his work; Wallace Stevens composes poems endlessly about the composition of poetry. These are not mere excesses or indulgences; they are, at one extreme, programs for creating quasi-religious orders or cults of the aesthetic, and at the other extreme, ceremonies for the renewal and rediscovery of life—and then, in the boldest leap of all, for the improvisation of a realm of being which will simply dispense with the gross category of "life."

The crucial instance of the effort to make the literary work self-sufficient is Symbolist poetry. Symbolism moves toward an art severed from common life and experience—a goal perhaps unrealizable but valuable as a "limit" for striving and motion. The Symbolists, as Marcel Raymond remarks, "share with the Romantics a reliance upon the epiphany, the moment of intense revelation; but they differ sharply about its status in nature and its relation to art. Wordsworth's spiritual life is founded on moments of intense illumination, and his poetry describes these and relates them to the whole experience of an ordered lifetime." For the Symbolist poet—archetypal figure in modernism—there is no question, however, of *describing* such an experience; for him the moment of illumination occurs only through the action of the poem, only through its thrust and realization as a particular form. Nor is there any question of relating it to the experience of a lifetime, for it is unique, transient, available only in the matter—perhaps more important, only in the moment—of the poem. Not transmission but revelation is the poet's task. And thereby the Symbolist poet tends to become a *magus*, calling his own reality into existence and making poetry into what Baudelaire called "suggestive magic."

Mallarmé, the Symbolist master, and Defoe, the specialist in verisimilitude, stand at opposite poles of the aesthetic spectrum, yet both share a desire to undo the premises and strategies of traditional art. Neither can bear the idea of the literary work as something distinct from, yet dependent upon, the external world. Defoe wishes to collapse his representation into the world, so that the reader will feel that the story of Moll Flanders *is* reality; Mallarmé wishes to purge his revelation of the contingent, so that the moment of union with his poem becomes the world. Both are enemies of Aristotle.

Stretched to its theoretic limit, symbolism proposes to disintegrate the traditional duality between the world and its representation. It finds intolerable the connection between art and the flaws of experience; it finds intolerable the commonly-accepted distance between subject and act of representation; it wishes to destroy the very program of representation, either as objective mimesis or subjective outcry. It is equally distant from realism and expressionism, faithfulness to the dimensions of the external and faithfulness to the distortions of the eye. Symbolism proposes to make the poem not merely autonomous but her-

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metic, and not merely hermetic but sometimes impenetrable. Freed from the dross of matter and time, poetry may then regain the aura, the power, of the mysterious. Passionately monistic, Symbolism wishes finally that *the symbol cease being symbolic* and become, instead, an act or object without "reference," sufficient in its own right. Like other extreme versions of modernism, Symbolism rebels against the preposition "about" in statements that begin "art is about. . . ." It yearns to shake off the burden of meaning, the alloy of idea, the tyranny and coarseness of opinion; it hopes for sacrament without faith. To fill up the spaces of boredom it would metamorphose itself into the purity of magic—and magic which, at its most pure, becomes a religion without costs.

Here the crucial instance is Rimbaud, breaking with the conception of language as a way of conveying rational thought, returning to its most primitive quality as a means for arousing emotions, incantatory, magical, and automatistic. Rimbaud praised Baudelaire in terms of his own artistic ends: "To inspect the invisible and hear things unheard [is] entirely different from gathering up the spirit of dead things. . . ."

HEROIC AS this effort may have been, the Symbolist aesthetic is inadequate in principle, a severe reduction of the scope and traditional claims of literature, and beyond sustaining in practice for more than a few moments. It cannot survive in daylight or the flatness of time. The fierce dualism it proposes cannot be maintained for long; soon the world contaminates the poem and the poem slides back into the world. Symbolism is a major element in modernist consciousness but more, I suspect, as a splendid drama to invoke than a fruitful discipline to follow.

As European civilization enters the period of social disorder and revolt that runs parallel to the life of literary modernism, there is really no possibility for maintaining a hermetic aestheticism. What follows from the impact of social crisis upon modernist literature is quite without that order and purity toward which Symbolism aspires —what follows is bewildering, plural, noisy. Into the vacuum of belief left by the collapse of Romanticism there race a number of competing world views, and these are beyond reconciling or even aligning. That is one reason it is quite impossible to sum up the central assumptions of modernism, as one can for Romanticism, by listing a sequence of beliefs and visions. Literary modernism is a battle of internal conflicts more than a coherent set of theories or values. It provides a vocabulary through which the most powerful imaginations of the time can act out a drama of doubt. Yet this commitment to the problematic is terribly hard to maintain, it requires nerves of iron; and even as the great figures of modernism sense that for them everything depends on keeping a firm grip on the idea of the problematic, many of them cannot resist completely the invading powers of ideology and system. It is at this point that there arises the famous, or but recently famous, problem of belief, perhaps the most discussed topic in the literary criticism of the past fifty years.

At a time when a number of competing world views impinge upon literature, each radically in conflict with one another, there arise severe difficulties in trying to relate the tacit assumptions of the writer to those of the reader. The bonds of premise between the two are broken, and must now become a matter of inquiry, effort, conflict. We read the late novels of D. H. Lawrence or the cantos of Ezra Pound, aware that these are works of enormously gifted writers yet steadily troubled by the outpouring of authoritarian and Fascist ideas. We read Bertolt Brecht's "To Posterity," in which he offers an incomparable evocation of the travail of Europe in the period between wars—"we changed our country more often than our shoes" —yet simultaneously weaves in a justification of the Stalin dictatorship. How are we to respond to all this? The question is crucial in our experience of modernist literature. We may say that the doctrine is irrelevant, as many critics do say, and that would lead us to the impossible position that the commanding thought of a poem need not be seriously considered in forming a judgment of its value. Or we may say that the doctrine, being obnoxious, destroys our pleasure in the poem, as some critics do say, and that would lead us to the impossible position that our judgment of the work is determined by our opinion concerning the author's ideology. There is, I think, no satisfactory solution in the abstract, and we must learn to accept the fact that modernist literature is often—not in this way alone!—"unacceptable." It forces us into distance and dissociation; it denies us wholeness of response; it alienates us from its own powers of statement even when we feel that it is imaginatively transcending the malaise of alienation.

The problem of belief appears with great force in the early phases of modernism and is then intensely discussed for some decades later, most notably in the criticism of Eliot and Richards. Later there arises a new impulse to dissolve the whole problem and to see literature as beyond opinion or belief, a performance or game of surfaces. Weariness sets in, and not merely with this or the other belief, but with the whole idea of belief. Through the brilliance and fervor of its straining, modernism begins to exhaust itself.

Yet no matter what impasse it encounters in its clashes with the external world, modernism is ceaselessly active within its own realm, endlessly inventive in destruction and improvisation. Its main enemy is, in one sense, the culture of the past, even though it bears within itself a marvelously full evidence of that culture. Literature now thrives on assaulting the traditional rules, modes,

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and limits of literature; the idea of aesthetic order is abandoned or radically modified.

To condemn modernist literature for a failure to conform to traditional criteria of unity, order, and coherence is, however, quite to miss the point, since, to begin with, it either rejects these criteria or proposes radical new ways of embodying them. When the critic Yvor Winters attacks the "fallacy of imitative form" (e.g., literary works dealing with the chaos of modern life themselves take on the appearance and sometimes the substance of chaos), he is in effect attacking modernist writing as such, since much of it cannot dispense with this 'fallacy." In its assumption that the sense of the real has been lost in conventional realism, modern writing yields to an imperative of distortion. A "law" could be advanced here: *modernist literature replaces the traditional criteria of aesthetic unity with the new criterion of aesthetic expressiveness, or perhaps more accurately, it downgrades the value of aesthetic unity in behalf of even a jagged and fragmented expressiveness.*

The expectation of formal unity implies an intellectual and emotional, indeed a philosophic composure; it assumes that the artist stands above his material, controlling it and aware of an impending resolution; it assumes that the artist has answers to his questions or that answers can be had. But for the modern writer none of these assumptions holds, or at least none of them can simply be taken for granted. He presents dilemmas; he cannot and soon does not wish to resolve them; he offers his *struggle* with them as the substance of his testimony; and whatever unity his work possesses, often not very much, comes from the emotional rhythm, the thrust toward completion, of that struggle. After Kafka it becomes hard to believe not only in answers but even in endings.

IN MODERNIST LITERATURE nature ceases to be a central subject and symbol. Beginning partly with Wordsworth, nature is transformed from an organic setting into a summoned or remembered *idea*, sometimes into a mere term of contrast. We remark upon the river Liffey, or the Mississippi woods, or the big twohearted river, or the Abruzzi countryside, but mostly as tokens of deprivation and sometimes as mere willed signs of nostalgia. These places are elsewhere, not our home; nature ceases to be natural.

Perversity—which is to say: surprise, excitement, shock, terror, affront—becomes a dominant motif. I borrow from G. S. Fraser a charming contrast between a traditional poet:

Love to Love calleth,
Love unto Love replieth—
From the ends of the earth, drawn by invisible bands,
Over the dawning and darkening lands
Love cometh to Love.
To the heart by courage and might
Escaped from hell,
From the torment of raging fire,
From the signs of the drowning main,
From the shipwreck of fear and pain
From the terror of night.

—and a modern poet:

I hate and love
You ask, how can that be?
I do not know, but know it tortures me.

The traditional poet is Robert Bridges, who lived as far back as the early 20th century; the modern poet, our twin, is Catullus.

The modernist writer strives for sensations, in the serious sense of the term; his epigones, in the frivolous sense. The modernist writer thinks of subject matter not as something to be rehearsed or recaptured but rather to be conquered and enlarged. He has little use for wisdom; or if he does, he conceives of it not as something to be dug out of the mines of tradition, but to be won for himself through an exercise in self-penetration, sometimes self-disintegration. He becomes entranced with depths—whichever you choose: the depths of the city, or the self, or the underground, or the slums, or the extremes of sensation induced by sex, liquor, drugs; or the shadowed half-people crawling through the interstices of society: *Lumpen*, criminals, hipsters; or the drives at the base of consciousness. Only Joyce, among the modernist writers, negotiates the full journey into and through these depths while yet emerging into the commonplace streets of the city and its ongoing commonplace life: which is, I think, one reason he is the greatest of the modernist writers, as also perhaps the one who points a way beyond the liberation of modernism.

The traditional values of decorum, both in the general ethical sense and the strictly literary sense, are overturned. Everything must now be explored to its outer and inner limits; but more, there are to be no limits. And then, since learning seems often to be followed by ignorance, there come the demi-prophets who scorn the very thought of limits; so that they drive themselves into the corner of wishing always to go beyond while refusing to acknowledge a line beyond which to go.

A plenitude of sophistication narrowing into decadence—this means that primitivism will soon follow. The search for meaning through extreme states of being reveals a yearning for the primal: for surely man cannot have been bored even at the moment of his creation! I have already spoken of the disgust with culture, the rage against cultivation, that is so important a part of modernism: the turning-in upon one's primary characteristics, the hatred of one's gifts, the contempt for intelligence, which cuts through the work of men so different as Rimbaud, Dostoevsky, and Hart Crane. For the modern sensibility is always haunted by the problem of succession: what, after such turn-

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ings and distensions of sensibility, can come next? One of the seemingly hopeful possibilities is a primitivism bringing a vision of new manliness, health, blood consciousness, a relief from enervating rationality. A central text is Lawrence's story, "The Woman Who Rode Away"—that realistic fable, at once so impressive and ridiculous—in which a white woman seeks out an Indian tribe to surrender her "quivering nervous consciousness" to its stricken sun god and thereby "accomplish the sacrifice and achieve the power." But within the ambiance of modernism there is another, more ambiguous and perhaps sinister kind of primitivism: the kind that draws us with the prospect not of health but of decay, the primitive as atavistic, an abandonment of civilization and thereby, perhaps, of its discontents. The central fiction expressing this theme is Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* in which Marlow the narrator and *raisonneur* does not hesitate to acknowledge that the pull of the jungle for Kurtz and also, more ambiguously, for himself is not that it seems to him (I am quoting Lionel Trilling) "noble or charming, or even free but . . . base and sordid—and for *that* reason compelling: he himself feels quite overtly its dreadful attraction." In this version of primitivism, which is perhaps inseparable from the ennui of decadence, the overwhelming desire is to shake off the burdens of social restraint, the disabling and wearisome moralities of civilized inhibition. The Greek poet Cavafy has written a brilliant poem in which the inhabitants of a modern city wait for a threatened invasion by barbarians and then, at the end, suffer the exasperating disappointment that the barbarians may, after all, not come. The people of the city will have to continue living as in the past, and who can bear it?

Why should this uneasiness begin all of a sudden,
And confusion? How serious people's faces have become.
Why are all the streets and squares emptying out so quickly,
And everyone turning home again so full of thought?
Because night has fallen and the Barbarians have not come,
And some people have arrived from the frontier,
They said there are no Barbarians any more.
And now what will become of us without Barbarians?
These people were some sort of solution.

IF TECHNICAL experiment and thematic surprise characterize modernist poetry, there are equivalent changes in the novel: a whole new sense of character, structure, and the role of its protagonist or hero. The problematic nature of experience tends to replace the experience of human nature as the dominant subject of the modern novel. Abandoning the assumption of a life that is knowable, the novelist turns to the problem of establishing a bridgehead into knowability as the precondition for portraying any life at all. His task becomes not so much depiction as the hypothesizing of a set of *as-if* terms, by means of which he may lend a temporary validation to his material.

Characters in a novel can no longer be assumed, as in the past, to be fixed and synthetic entities, with a set of traits available through notations of conduct and reports of psychic condition. The famous remark of D. H. Lawrence—that he had lost interest in creating the "old stable ego of character," but wished to posit "another ego, according to whose action the individual is unrecognizable, and passes through, as it were, allotropic states which it needs a deeper sense than any we've been used to exercise, to discover are states of the same radically unchanged element"—this is not merely a statement of what he would try to do in *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*; it also reflects a general intention among modern novelists. Character, for modernists like Joyce, Virginia Woolf, and Faulkner, is regarded not as a coherent, definable, and well-structured entity, but as a psychic battlefield, or an insoluble puzzle, or the occasion for a flow of perceptions and sensations. This tendency to dissolve character into a stream of atomized experiences, a kind of novelistic *pointillisme,* gives way, perhaps through extreme reaction, to an opposite tendency (yet one equally opposed to traditional concepts of novelistic character) in which character is severed from psychology and confined to a sequence of severely objective events.

Similar radical changes occur in the modernist treatment of plot. The traditional 18th- or 19th-century novel depends upon a plot which reveals a major destiny, such as Henchard's in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. A plot consists here of an action purposefully carved out of time, that is, provided with a beginning, sequence of development, and climax, so that it will create the impression of completeness. Often this impression comes from the sense that the action of a novel, as given shape by the plot, has exhausted its possibilities of significant extension; the problems and premises with which it began have reached an appropriate terminus. Thus we can say that in the traditional kind of novel it is usually the plot which carries or releases a body of meanings: these can be profound or trivial, comic or tragic. *The Mayor of Casterbridge* contains a plot which fulfills the potential for self-destruction in the character of Henchard—but it is important to notice that in *this* kind of novel we would have no knowledge of that potential except insofar as we can observe its effects through an action. Plot here comes to seem inseparable from meaning, and meaning to inhere in plot.

When a writer works out a plot, he tacitly assumes that there is a rational structure in human conduct, that this structure can be ascertained, and that doing so he is enabled to provide his

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work with a sequence of order. But in modernist literature these assumptions come into question. In a work written on the premise that there is no secure meaning in the portrayed action, or that while the action can hold our attention and rouse our feelings, we cannot be certain, indeed must remain uncertain, as to the possibilities of meaning—in such a characteristically modern work what matters is not so much the plot but a series of *situations,* some of which can be portrayed statically, through tableaux, set-pieces, depth psychology, and others dynamically, through linked episodes, stream of consciousness, etc. Kafka's fiction, Joyce's novels, some of Faulkner's—these all contain situations rather than plot.

STILL MORE striking are the enormous changes which the modern novel brings about in its treatment of the fictional hero.

The modern world has lost the belief in a collective destiny. Hence, the hero finds it hard to be certain that he possesses—or that anyone can possess—the kind of powers that might transform human existence. Men no longer feel themselves bound in a sacred or even, often enough, in a temporal kinship. Hence, the hero finds it hard to believe in himself as a chosen figure acting in behalf of a divine commandment or national will.

Since the beginnings of the bourgeois era, a central problem for reflective men has been the relation of the individual to the collectivity. In modern fiction this problem often appears as a clash between a figure of consciousness who embodies the potential of the human and a society moving in an impersonal rhythm that is hostile or, what is perhaps worse, indifferent to that potential. One likes to feel, by way of contrast, that in certain kinds of ancient or traditional heroes there was a union of value and power, the sense of the good and the capacity to act it out. But in modern literature, value and power are taken to be radically dissociated. In Hemingway's novels the price of honor is often a refusal of the world. In Malraux's novels the necessity for action is crossed by a conviction of its absurdity. In Silone's novels the condition of humaneness is a readiness to wait. Between the apprehension and the deed falls a shadow of uncertainty.

D. H. Lawrence, not only a great novelist but himself a major hero of modern literature, embodies this duality. At one point he says: "Insofar as I am I, and only I am I, and I am only I, insofar as I am inevitably and eternally alone, it is my last blessedness to know it, and to accept it, and to live with this as the core of my self-knowledge." It is the self-knowledge of the Lawrentian hero, strong in pride, sick in strength. But there is another D. H. Lawrence: "What ails me is the absolute frustration of my primeval societal instinct. . . . I think societal instinct much deeper than sex instinct—and societal repression much more devastating. . . . I am weary even of my individuality, and simply nauseated by other people's." It is the yearning of the Lawrentian hero, eager for disciples, driven to repel those who approach him. This is a conflict which, in our time, cannot be resolved. The Lawrentian hero remains a man divided between the absolutism of his individuality and the frustration of his societal instinct.

Let me push ahead a bit further, and list several traits of "the modern hero," though not in the delusion that any fictional character fulfills all or even most of them:

- The modern hero is a man who believes in the necessity of action; he wishes, in the words of Malraux, to put "a scar on the map." Yet the moral impulsions that lead him to believe in action, also render him unfit for action. He becomes dubious about the value of inflicting scars and is not sure he can even locate the map.
- He knows that traditionally the hero is required to act out the part of bravery, but he discovers that his predicament requires courage. Bravery signifies a mode of action, courage a mode of being. And since he finds it difficult to reconcile the needs of action with those of being, he must learn that to summon courage he will have to abandon bravery. His sense of the burden he must carry brings him close to the situation described by William James: "Heroism is always on a precipitous edge, and only keeps alive by running. Every moment is an escape."
- He knows that the hero can act with full power only if he commands, for his followers and himself, an implicit belief in the meaningfulness of the human scheme. But the more he commits himself to the gestures of heroism, the more he is persuaded of the absurdity of existence. Gods do not speak to him, prophets do not buoy him, nor doctrines assuage him.
- The classical hero moved in a world charged with a sense of purpose. In the early bourgeois era, the belief in purpose gave way to a belief in progress. This the hero managed to survive, if only because he often saw through the joke of progress. But now his problem is to live in a world that has moved beyond the idea of progress; and that is hard.
- The modern hero often begins with the expectation of changing the world. But after a time his central question becomes: can I change myself? He asks, in the words of Herman Hesse's Demian, "I wanted only to try to live in obedience to the promptings which came from my true self. Why was that so very difficult?"
- If the modern hero decides the world is beyond changing, he may try, as in the novels of Hemingway, to create a hermetic world of his own in which an unhappy few live by a self-willed code that makes possible—they tell themselves—struggle, renewal, and honorable defeat.
- Still, the modern hero often continues to believe in the quest, and sometimes in the grail too;

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only he is no longer persuaded that quest is necessarily undertaken through public action and he is unsure as to where the grail can be found. If he happens to be an American named Jay Gatsby, he may even look for it on the shores of Long Island. There is reason to believe that this is a mistake.

• The modern hero moves from the heroic deed to the heroism of consciousness, a heroism often available only in defeat. He comes as a conqueror and stays as a pilgrim. And in consciousness he seeks those moral ends which the hero is traditionally said to have found through the deed. He learns, in the words of Kyo Gisors in Malraux's *Man's Fate,* that "a man resembles his suffering."

• The modern hero discovers that he cannot be a hero. Yet only through his readiness to face the consequences of this discovery can he salvage a portion of the heroic.

IN ITS MULTIPLICITY and brilliant confusion, its commitment to an aesthetic of endless renewal —in its improvisation of "the tradition of the new," a paradox envisaging the limit of *limitlessness*—modernism is endlessly open to portraiture and analysis. For just as some of its greatest works strain toward a form freed from beginning or end, so modernism strains toward a life without fixity or conclusion. If, nevertheless, there is in literary modernism a dominant preoccupation which the writer must either subdue or by which he will surely be destroyed, that is the specter of nihilism.

Nihilism is a term not only wide-ranging in reference but heavily charged with historical emotion. It signifies at least some of the following:

A specific doctrine, positivist in stress, of an all-embracing rebellion against traditional authority which appeared in mid-19th-century Russia;

A consciously affirmed and accepted loss of belief in transcendent imperatives and secular values as guides to moral conduct, together with a feeling that there is no meaning resident—or, at least, further resident—in human existence;

A loss of those tacit impulsions toward an active and striving existence which we do not even know to be at work in our consciousness until we have become aware of their decline.

In Western literature nihilism is first and most powerfully foreshadowed by Dostoevsky: there is nothing to believe in but the senses and the senses soon exhaust themselves. God is impossible but all is impossible without him. Dostoevsky is maliciously witty, maliciously inventive in his perception of the faces of nihilism. He sees it, first, as a social disorder without boundary or shame: Pyotr Verhovensky in an orgy of undoing, mocking the very idea of purpose, transforming the ethic of modernist experiment into an appeal for collective suicide, seizing upon the most exalted words in order to hollow them out through burlesque. "If there's no God, how can I be a captain then," asks an old army officer in *The Possessed,* and in the derision that follows one fancies that Dostoevsky joins, in half-contempt, half-enchantment. Nihilism appears in moral guise through the figures of Kirillov and Ivan Karamazov, the first a man of purity and the second a man of seriousness; that both are good men saves them not at all, for the demon of emptiness, says Dostoevsky, lodges most comfortably in the hearts of the disinterested. And in Stavrogin, that "subtle serpent" stricken with metaphysical despair and haunted by "the demon of irony," nihilism achieves an ultimate of representation: nothingness in flesh, flesh that would be nothing. "We are all nihilists," says Dostoevsky in the very course of his struggle to make himself into something else. His great achievement is to sense, as Nietzsche will state, the intrinsic connection between nihilism as doctrine and nihilism as experience of loss. Just as Jane Austen saw how trivial lapses in conduct can lead to moral disaster, so Dostoevsky insisted that casual concessions to boredom can drive men straight into the void.

Flaubert, though not concerned with the problem abstractly, writes: "Life is so horrible that one can only bear it by avoiding it. And that can be done by living in the world of Art." The idea of Art as a sanctuary from the emptying-out of life is intrinsic to modernism: it is an idea strong in Nietzsche, for whom the death of God is neither novelty nor scandal but simply a given fact. The resulting disvaluation of values and the sense of bleakness which follows, Nietzsche calls nihilism. He sees it as connected with the assertion that God exists, which robs the world of ultimate significance, and with the assertion that God does not exist, which robs everything of significance.

> The destruction of the moral interpretation of the world, which has no sanction anymore after it has attempted to flee into some beyond, ends in nihilism. "All is senseless. . . ." Since Copernicus man rolls from the center into "X". . . . What does nihilism mean? That the highest values disvalue themselves. The goal is lacking; the answer is lacking to our "Why?"

Fundamentally, then, nihilism comes to imply a loss of connection with the sources of life, so that both in experience and in literature it is always related to, while analytically distinguishable from, the blight of boredom.

Recognizing all this, Dostoevsky tries to frighten the atheist both within himself and within his contemporaries by saying that once God is denied, everything—everything terrible—has become possible. Nietzsche gives the opposite answer, declaring that from the moment man believes neither in God nor immortality, "he becomes responsible for everything alive, for everything that, born of suffering, is condemned to suffer from life." And thus for Nietzsche, as later for the existentialists, a confrontation with the nihilist void becomes the major premise of human recovery.

With remarkable powers of invention and variation, this theme makes its way through all of

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modernist literature. In Kafka's work negation and faith stand forever balanced on the tip of a question-mark; there are no answers, there are no endings, and whether justice can be found at the trial, or truth in the castle, we never know for certain. The angel with whom Kafka wrestles heroically and without letup is the angel of nothingness. Proust constructs a social world marvelously thick and rich in texture yet a shadow too, which a mere wind blows away; and the only hope we have that some meaning may be salvaged is through the power of art, that thin cloak between men and the beyond which nevertheless carries "the true last judgment." This very power of art is seen by Mann as a demon of nihilism trailing both himself and his surrogate figures from novel to novel, as a portent of disease in "Death in Venice" and as a creator-destroyer in *Doctor Faustus* who disintegrates everything through parody. Brecht leers at the familiar strumpet of city nihilism, vomits with disgust when she approaches too closely, and then kidnaps her for a marriage with the authoritarian idea: the result endears him to the contemporary world. But it is Joyce who engages in the most profound modern exploration of nihilism, for he sees it everywhere, in the newspaper office and the church, on the street and in bed, through the exalted and the routine. Exposing his characters to every version of nausea and self-disgust, bringing Stephen Dedalus to his outcry of "*Nothung*" in the brothel, Joyce emerges, as William Troy remarks, with "an energetic and still uncorrupted affirmation of life that is implicit in every movement of his writing." As for those who follow these masters, they seem to have relaxed in the death-struggle with the shapeless demon and some, among the more fashionable of the moment, even strike a pleasant truce with him. But the power of example remains a great one and if a writer like Norman Mailer does not choose to wrestle with the angel Kafka encountered, there are moments when he is prepared to challenge it to a bit of amiable hand-wrestling.

Nihilism lies at the center of all that we mean by modernist literature, both as subject and symptom, a demon overcome and a demon victorious. For the terror which haunts the modern mind is that of a meaningless and eternal death. The death of the gods would not trouble us if we, in discovering that they have died, did not have to die alongside them. Heroically the modern sensibility struggles with its passion for eternal renewal, even as it keeps searching for ways to secure its own end.

But no, it will not die, neither heroically nor quietly, in struggle or triumph. It will live on, beyond age, through vulgar reincarnation and parodic mimesis. The lean youth has grown heavy; he chokes with the approval of the world he had dismissed; he cannot find the pure air of neglect. Not the hostility of those who came before but the patronage of those who come later—that is the torment of modernism.

How, come to think of it, do great cultural movements reach their end? It is a problem our literary historians have not sufficiently examined, perhaps because they find beginnings more glamorous, and a problem that is now especially difficult because there has never been, I think, a cultural period in Western history quite like the one we call modern. But signs of a denouement begin to appear. A lonely gifted survivor, Beckett, remains to remind us of the glories modernism once brought. Meanwhile, the decor of yesterday is appropriated and slicked up; the noise of revolt, magnified in a frolic of emptiness; and what little remains of modernism, denied so much as the dignity of opposition.

How enviable death must be to those who no longer have reason to live yet are unable to make themselves die! Modernism will not come to an end; its war chants will be repeated through the decades. For what seems to await it is a more painful and certainly less dignified conclusion than that of earlier cultural movements: what awaits it is publicity and sensation, the kind of savage parody which may indeed be the only fate worse than death.

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HANS JONAS

JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY, AND THE WESTERN TRADITION

If one wishes to assess the respective roles of Jewish and Christian elements in the Western philosophical tradition, one is immediately confronted by two questions. First of all, in what, if any, sense can these elements be separated in such a context? Judaism and Christianity in themselves are distinctly separate entities, to be sure; but when considering their influence on Western thought, we must bear in mind that Christianity alone, or almost alone, transmitted the Jewish share, simply by what it contained of it in its own, original constitution. Thus if Jewish elements are to be found in the history of Western thought, they are Christian elements there, and our theme which calls for a confrontation of them in this medium seems to collapse at the outset. It seems to collapse into the well-worked theme of the Judaeo-Christian component of Western thought, with the hyphen denoting an indissoluble connection—as indissoluble, indeed, as the connection between the Old and New Testaments in Christianity itself.

Even if it should prove possible to separate, for our purposes, the elements of this hyphenated whole, one would still have to face another question: in what sense can these elements—Jewish, Christian, or Judaeo-Christian—be considered a part of the *philosophical* tradition? They are, according to their own testimony, based on revelation, while philosophy is based on reason. This being the case, can religion enter philosophy without either disrupting it or forsaking itself? If the answer to this question were to be No, the history of Jewish and Christian influence on philosophy could be nothing but a history of trespass and mutual adulteration. Such elements of religion as actually found their way into philosophy would then be there not by right but by encroachment; they would be non-philosophical elements within philosophy, and the study of them would constitute a merely historical rather than a genuinely philosophical investigation. In short, it would seem that one ought to speak not of elements within philosophy, but of interference with philosophy.

Yet to philosophy even the experience of encroachment, including the eventual overcoming of it, would itself be a philosophical experience. Unlike the interference of ordinary interest, power, or prejudice, which touches philosophy only at its outskirts and becomes at most a matter for philosophical tactics, the claim of revelation to the highest truth touches philosophy at its core and must affect its whole strategy. Thus the totality of the claim made by revealed religion imposed *questions* and perspectives on philosophy which it would otherwise not have faced, and which were destined to outlive the answers that philosophy at first obediently accepted from revelation. And even if "Christian philosophy," or "Jewish philosophy," is finally recognized to be a contradiction in terms, the very recognition and assimilation of *this* truth would be a philosophical feat, and one that leaves philosophy different and more self-knowing than it was before. Philosophy's reflection—e.g., on the scope and limits of rational knowledge—was infinitely radicalized through the confrontation with revealed truth. This and similar radicalizations, forced on philosophy by the exacting coexistence with religion, changed the whole climate of philosophizing. Philosophy could not but try to match the unconditional spirit of its rival. That is one reason why later philosophy lacks the composure, the spirit of moderation, so characteristic of ancient philosophy.

But in the course of the religious-philosophical dialectic, something more occurs than an imposition on philosophy of alien themes and the subsequent self-assertion and radicalization of philosophy. Since philosophy is the work of living men, the philosopher's participation in the common heritage of faith asserts itself in his philosophizing. As a result, certain ideas, motifs, and choices of revealed religion pass over, open or concealed, into the patrimony of philosophy itself and—eventually dissociated from their origin in revelation and its authority—become genuine parts of the modified philosophical landscape.

This is not merely a matter of the insinuation of extraneous ideas into philosophy through the all-too-human psychology of the philosopher.

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Rather, it is a matter of the legitimate continuation, in the medium of philosophy, of existential insights and emphases whose original locus is the world of faith, but whose validity and vitality extend beyond the reaches of faith. A basic concept of man and the world speaks through the Word of God and hence informs the understanding of man as a general premise that will underlie even his worldly philosophizing. And it will be at home there by rights and not by stealth; it may even come fully into its own there. In this sense of an assimilation which may be transforming enough to make us speak of a secularization of originally religious thought, one can meaningfully look for Jewish or Christian elements in a philosophy that need not therefore be a Jewish or a Christian philosophy, or indeed a religious philosophy at all.

But this conclusion leaves unanswered the prior question: can Jewish and Christian elements be separated in the Western philosophical tradition? Strictly speaking, they cannot. When the Western world constituted itself a Christian world, Christianity gained something of a monopoly in mediating the Jewish heritage, and once this situation prevailed authentic Judaism had little opportunity to exert its influence independently and directly. This being the case, we must accept the Jewish theme in the form in which Christianity transmitted it. As it was through the Church that Jewish teaching, however partially, was impressed on the West, so it was mainly in the Christian embrace that it also entered the orbit of Western philosophy. If, then, we reclaim it there for the Jewish side, we must realize that we are somehow splitting the phenomenon of Christianity down the middle. We do violence to the consciousness of a past age when we divide what was indivisible to it: the one sacred truth of the Christian creed.

One justification for such a procedure lies in the fact that in their *philosophical* reception the fortunes of the two halves of the Christian whole were indeed markedly different. This becomes apparent if we understand by the "Jewish half" whatever Christianity still has in common with Judaism, and as specifically Christian whatever goes beyond that. For the sake of brevity we can identify the former by the concept of Creation, the latter by the concept of Incarnation. Having made this distinction, we can see at once the different philosophical fortunes of the two halves. The doctrine of creation, with all that flows from it concerning the concepts of nature and man, was thematically close enough to the terms of natural theology to fall, as an issue, within the philosophical domain and thus *had* to be taken up by philosophy, whether affirmatively or negatively. On the other hand, the doctrine of the trinity and of incarnation was more alien to the established themes of philosophy; it seemed to defy philosophical assimilation and compel recognition as a supra-rational mystery.

In short, the *rational* status of the two components of the Christian complex, and therefore their suitability for philosophical assimilation, were *intrinsically unequal*. We shall therefore not be surprised by the seemingly paradoxical finding that in a Christian intellectual universe it was the Jewish component which had the major philosophical impact. In fact, as far as I can see, it was not before Hegel's theory of the absolute Spirit, its alienation and self-consummation through human history, that the theme of incarnation found major expression in philosophy—and then only by the boldest transmutation.

II

LET US TURN first to the cardinal and most obviously Jewish theme thrust on Western philosophy by Christian faith, the theme of creation, and to that aspect of it on which so much philosophical controversy centered: the teaching that the world had a beginning in time. The controversy arose because classical philosophy—Neoplatonic as well as Aristotelian—had taught that the world was eternal. At first glance, the difference between the two views seems to be about the past only and to have no bearing on the conception of the existing nature of things. But in truth it profoundly affects the latter. The encounter with the philosophical view elicited from the biblical doctrine its latent implications concerning the whole nature of reality and made these at home in philosophy as an alternative, no less philosophical, theory of the world. Seen from the long perspective of modernity, it can be said that the challenger, in a purely secular garb, eventually prevailed over the classical view, philosophy's native child.

What was the philosophical meaning of the classical view that the world is eternal? We may summarize it in the following eight points:

(1) The sensible world is in some sense (variously specified in various systems) an extension of the divine nature. That is to say, it is itself a mode of divine being, even if a derivative and diminished mode.

(2) The nexus of derivation is one of necessity. That is to say, the world is a necessary consequence of the divine nature, and this in the double sense that it exists because the divine exists, and it exists as it is because the divine nature is what it is. In short, the existence as well as the essence of the world are necessitated by the existence and the essence of God.

(3) The necessity of the world's *existence* entails co-eternity with God. Given the eternity of divine being, the world as its accompaniment or expression cannot at any time not be; thus it cannot have a beginning or an end (though the things in the world can either be or not be and thus have a beginning and an end).

(4) The necessity of the world's *essence* means that its *order*, deriving from the divine nature, is

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as eternal as its existence, deriving from the divine reality. The fullness of the proposition that the world cannot not be, is that it cannot be *other* than it is.

(5) That the world cannot be other than it is, holds only insofar as God Himself cannot be other than He is. The necessity of the world's essence is predicated on the necessity of God's essence—the eternity of the former on the immutability of the latter. Thus God has an essence or nature if the world has one, and a nature of the kind which intrinsically excludes mutability.

(6) The intrinsic impossibility of "being otherwise" pertains to logical or rational necessity. Thus if God is the primary locus of necessity, He must be pure reason or intellect. This, indeed, is the divine nature.

(7) Accordingly, the "essential" necessity of the world is equivalent to its rationality, i.e., to what it possesses of rationality and is thus open to knowledge. The rational necessity of the world is a qualified one, while the divine rationality is unqualified. The qualified rationality of the physical order, the degree of its intrinsic intelligibility, is the measure of its divinity—and indeed the inductive path to the conception of pure divinity.

By now it is clear that the thesis of the eternity of the world involves a whole ontology. In other words, this thesis is intimately connected with the theses that God has a nature; that this nature consists of pure intellect and thus enjoys the immutability of intrinsic necessity; and that the world's lesser nature has the relation of analogy, similitude, or image to the divine original, a relation which is attested by the world's degree of intelligibility.

(8) This brings us to the final point. Terms like "similitude" and "degree" suggest that God and world are members of a continuum in which God is the summit of a scale that comprises degrees of approximation to His absolute norm. The system of being, to which God Himself belongs, is thus a hierarchy with intermediate levels between the minimum and the maximum, between grossest matter and purest form. Thus a pervading homogeneity of being unites man, nature, and God.

All this is involved in the doctrine of the eternity of the world. Upon this integrated scheme of theory burst the biblical doctrine of creation, which posited a temporal beginning of the world. What conceptual adjustments did its acceptance enforce on the philosophical stage? To put it as briefly as possible, the biblical doctrine pitted contingency against necessity, particularity against universality, will against intellect. It secured a place for the "contingent" within philosophy, against the latter's original bias. If we add to this the divorce of mind and nature which followed from the Jewish-Christian separation of God and world and eventually led to the specifically modern division of philosophy into human and natural philosophy, we need not fear that we are exaggerating when we speak of the immense consequences of the encounter between the biblical and the classical views.

When that encounter had to all intents and purposes run its course, and philosophy was just turning to new tasks, Francis Bacon pointed out that it was "heathen opinion" (i.e., ancient philosophy) which had supposed the world to be the image of God, while "sacred truth" (i.e., Scripture) had denied this honor to the world and reserved it to man, declaring the world to be God's handiwork only, and not His image. I leave it an open question whether the spokesman of the new philosophy, which aimed at the subjection of nature to man, was sincere or rhetorical in this appeal to "sacred truth." But I do maintain that it was the long impact of "sacred truth" on philosophical thought which made the new direction of philosophy possible—and therewith, for better or for worse, the modern mind. Clearly, in contrast to pagan nature worship, the very idea of Jewish monotheism implied a certain demotion of the world, and much of prophetic energy was expended in hammering home the truth that no part of the world was divine and that all its parts, with the sole exception of man, were equally different from their Maker. This essential equality of createdness implicitly did away with any natural gradations toward God and thus with the idea of a cosmic hierarchy.

The full consequences of the biblical doctrine were received into philosophy only at the end of a long process of erosion of classical metaphysics. The first polemical stress was on the idea of contingency. In its earliest and most extreme form, that of the Islamic Kalam, it went somewhat as follows: If, as the philosophers claim, the world came forth with necessity from the divine essence, then it must, in plan and in detail, be deducible from first intellectual principles. But it cannot be so deduced. Its constitution cannot be demonstrated *a priori*. There is a refractory, irreducible factuality about the structure and concrete manifoldness of the world. Everything, from the color of a blossom to the order of the stars, could as well —that is to say, without contradiction—be other than it actually is. The nature it actually has represents a choice from among all the possible alternatives; strictly speaking, from an infinite range of possibilities. But choice is a matter of the will. Thus the logical evidence of the world is more in accord with its having been called forth by the free spontaneity of divine will than with its having emanated or otherwise derived from the divine essence. God could have willed the world otherwise than it is, or not have willed it at all. And the world itself proclaims its createdness by its intrinsic contingency.

In this argument of the Kalam, an immanent character of worldly being is made to yield testi-

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mony for the transcendent fact of creation. To this extent, it is a philosophical argument; but it is destructive of knowledge and thus of philosophy itself, for it makes each particular at each moment the creature of a divine will that is bound by no general law. It deprives the created things of any nature and force of their own and thus of all explanatory connection among them. Only God's arbitrary pleasure saves each thing from instant relapse into nothingness.

The skeptical import of this extreme view can be seen clearly in al-Ghazali's critique of causal knowledge, by which he buttresses the theological attribution of causality to God alone. In a remarkable anticipation of Malebranche and Hume, al-Ghazali argues that the connection of so-called cause and effect, that is of one thing following upon another, is not a necessary, i.e., intelligible, connection. No one thing really entails another. The sequence of things is all that is known, and since its grounding is not to be found in any antecedent thing, nor within the physical series at all, it must be sought in the sole power of God. In that case, however, there is no possibility of a science of nature, which must be a science of causes.

This "Humean" skepticism was to find its "Kantian" answer. It was Maimonides who lifted the consideration of contingency onto a higher plane, which combined contingency of the whole with necessity among its parts. To Maimonides, an Aristotelian and a creationist at the same time, the world is a coherent whole governed by laws—the laws of Aristotelian physics—which concretely determine what is necessary and possible within it. Thus there *can* be a science of nature, and the mere abstract possibility of logical alternatives does not lessen the cogency of that science.

According to Maimonides, however, the governing laws themselves, from which everything else follows in intelligible order, are not logically deducible in turn, nor are they rationally self-evident. These laws, the ultimate conditions of the given cosmic reality, must be accepted as pure fact, as must the particular layout of the macrocosmic framework in which they operate. In other words, contingency is shifted from the single existences to their principles, from the conclusions to the premises of the cosmic syllogism, with that syllogism retaining its internal necessity once its terms have been granted. Not each single item is contingent, as the Kalam maintained: it is their total set that represents an arbitrary choice and is in that sense contingent. As Thomas Aquinas later put it, God freely selected for realization *this* world from all the possible worlds. But a world, of course, is a determinate order.

This Maimonidean synthesis saved both the Aristotelian rationality of the universe and the biblical non-rationality of its origin. However, since Maimonides recognized the validity of Aristotelian physics, he was compelled to face the Aristotelian proofs for the eternity of the world, derived from that physics.

It is at this point that Maimonides evolved his profound doctrine of the relative scope of all reasoning that makes use of the laws of nature. Holding it to be true, as Aristotle had taught, that every motion within the universe involved a preceding motion, and so forth *ad infinitum*; and that all becoming presupposes matter, so that a coming-to-be of matter itself would presuppose another matter, and so forth again *ad infinitum*—he, against Aristotle, held it not to be true that these laws, valid for things within the world, can be extended to apply beyond the world, for instance, to the relationship of the world as a whole to God. The laws in question do indeed specify the internal conditions of the system we call the world, but they have nothing to say about the coming-to-be of that system itself.

This is the first enunciation of a principle concerning the area of pertinence of natural categories and the limits of their speculative use, a principle which was to find its final formulation in the philosophy of Kant. Thus was the long self-examination of speculative reason brought under way. Nothing short of the encounter with creationist faith and its transcendent demands on speculation could have compelled reason to such a relentless probing of itself and its possible range.

Kant still used the question of a temporal beginning or non-beginning of the world as one of the instances by which he demonstrated that the perennial issues of metaphysics are beyond the competence of reason to resolve. It is to be noted, however, that in Kant "contingency" is relocated once more: this time it is shifted from the principles of nature to the principles of knowledge. To put it differently: the rational limitation imposed by createdness now resides in the finite nature of the knowing subject rather than in the nature of finite things. The tradition had seen in man's cognitive faculty his eminent title to being "in the image of God," for notwithstanding all the difference between the created and the uncreated, the finite and the infinite, man's intellect was considered to be of a kind with absolute intellect. According to Kant, however, it is precisely the *theoretical* intellect which bears the main burden of createdness by being unaccountably cast in a particular mold. If man is "in the image of God" it is because of his *practical* reason, that is, his *will*, in which his potential of moral perfection resides: the self-determination of the will is his only remaining point of contact with the absolute. As we shall presently see, this line of reasoning puts Kant closer to the "voluntarist" line of medieval thought that culminated in Duns Scotus, than to the "intellectualist" line represented by Maimonides and Aquinas.

To come back to Maimonides, his strictures on the scope of natural reason fall on friend and foe

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alike: he acknowledges that the disproof of Aristotelian arguments for the eternity of the world does not prove the alternative of "creation from nothing," but merely gives it logical eligibility. In regard to the truths of revelation, reason can generally demonstrate no more than that they are not repugnant to reason, and perhaps that they have an edge when it comes to probability or plausibility. In this form, with some variation as to the exact drawing of the line, the idea of a demarcation of the domains of faith and reason was taken over by the Christian West.

Here a word about Thomas Aquinas is in order. Thomas went beyond Maimonides's critical caution by including *creatio ex nihilo* (along with his proofs for God's existence) among the demonstrable truths, and thus he widened the scope of natural theology. At the same time, the realm of the non-demonstrable was swelled by those Christian mysteries—trinity, original sin, incarnation, purgatory, etc.—about which Jewish and Islamic thought did not have to concern themselves. Thus the extension of the rational domain did not entail a contraction of the supra-rational one, or a lessening of the chasm between the two. On the contrary, the mysterious character of the peculiarly Christian doctrines led to a greater tension between reason and faith than the "Jewish part" of revelation had required. Indeed, when Thomas says that "through natural reason we can know that about God which pertains to the unity of His essence, but not that which pertains to the distinction of His persons," he is, in effect, spelling out the different rational status of the "Jewish" and the "Christian" elements of the Christian faith. The former are at most beyond rational proof (as they are for Maimonides); the latter are "supra-rational" in a sense that bears a suspicion of their being contrary to reason. Consequently, there is merit in the faith that holds on to them in the teeth of such rational strain; and a priority is assigned to the will, which moves the intellect to assent to these propositions. In spite of Aquinas's own unifying spirit, then, the Christian universe of discourse inevitably shows a sharpening of the dialectics between reason and faith.

III

Let us return once more to the subject of creation. It will have been noted that the argument from contingency places the sign of "createdness" on a negative rather than a positive feature of the world: on the absence of that rational necessity which, according to classical doctrine, the world should have. The negative aspect becomes even more manifest in the insistence on creation "from nothing," whose philosophical significance we must now probe, especially since it was not really demanded by the biblical text. In general, of course, the doctrine falls into the observed pattern of "putting the world in its place." That which is called into being from sheer nothingness is totally dependent on its transcendent cause not only for its origin but also for its continued existence. By reason of its "natural priority," the "nothing" looms in the very heart of things, ready to reclaim them at every moment, were it not for their continuous recreation by God. This is the extreme of negativity with which the doctrine of creation imbues mundane being. But in true dialectical fashion, this very extreme brings to light the positive aspect of the reappraisal of being which the idea of creation caused in philosophy. We can discover that positive aspect by turning to that ingredient in the doctrine of "creation from nothing" which directly relates it to the philosophical tradition, namely the negation of pre-existent matter. Why is this negation important, apart from the motive of homage to divine omnipotence? One answer to this question can be given in terms of the traditional philosophical doctrine of matter and form. If matter were pre-existent, creation would consist of imparting form to it and in that case God would be the principle of form, which means intellect; but form is universal, as is intellectual knowledge. Thus God, being the author of the universal only and not of the particular, would not know the particulars; and thus there would be no individual providence. If there is to be individual providence, and its condition, divine knowledge of particulars, then matter, the principle of individuation, must be divinely created too, or it must be as directly an object of the divine will as are the forms. Thus for the sake of particular providence, so vital to both Judaism and Christianity, *creatio ex nihilo* had to replace or to recast the "essentialist" form-matter ontology of the past.

The philosophical effect of this line of thought is to change the whole ontological status of individual existence. And here we can see how utter negativity in one respect turns into utter positivity in another. Against the background of nothingness from which it is called forth, individual being assumes a rank of primacy which all ancient philosophy had denied it. To be called forth from nothing and to exist only by virtue of a constant renewal of this act, assures each individual being of the immediate interest of the creative cause and so makes it interesting in itself. The divine attention required individually for their mere existing gives the single entities their own truth and a corresponding claim on the attention of knowledge. This changed approach benefits both the knower and the known, the human subject and the things of the world as his potential objects: both, in their ultimate particularity as willed by God, have gained a status in the conceptual scheme of things which they had not enjoyed before. As Maimonides put it: all parts of creation are with equal authenticity intended by the divine will; all therefore are ends in themselves. When, in the later Middle Ages, this train of reasoning

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was joined by the mighty tide of nominalism, which itself was actuated by a similar concern with individuality, Petrus Aureoli (in the 14th century) could say that "it is nobler to know the thing individuated . . . than to know it through the abstract and universal mode."

IV

In our discussion, we have repeatedly come upon the concept of the "will." This concept is, indeed, the common denominator in which the different aspects of the idea of creation meet and in which they fully reveal their positive—and explosive—side. Will is equally the principle of the contingent and of the particular. It chooses for being what could also not be; it chooses this thing rather than anything else; and it chooses, in the first place, that there be anything at all. While its choice may be guided by essence, will is directed toward existence, and its results share in the uniqueness of its own decisions: they are "this," and "this once," and unexchangeably themselves. Pure intellect, the principle of the necessary and the universal, cannot determine the transition from essence to existence, from universal to particular, from the eternal to the temporal. This is why creationist theology always interposed divine will and its freedom between divine wisdom and divine power, and increasingly emphasized will among the attributes of God. And this emphasis on the divine will was soon reflected in the emphasis on man's will—first as the respondent of God's will, which in His commandments addresses itself to will more than to anything else in man; then increasingly as the dominant attribute of man himself. The theological doctrine of God's attributes engendered, or at least encouraged, a philosophical doctrine of man's attributes.

It is beyond the scope of this essay to trace the rise of the Western metaphysics of the will, a metaphysics whose roots were Jewish-Christian, and the anti-Christian culmination of which we behold in Nietzsche and in modern existentialism. But it is worth pointing out that the vigor of its growth is a fruit of the encounter between the Jewish-Christian and the Greek standpoints: without the dialectical stress against the essentialist-intellectualist bias of traditional philosophy, there would hardly have arisen a theory of the primacy of the will—with all the consequences that such a theory entails.

Though our account must necessarily be incomplete, we may try to describe some aspects of the development of this Western voluntarism. It had two distinct points of departure; on the one hand, it stemmed from Augustine's stress on the will in *man*, as the ultimate locus of the drama of sin and salvation; on the other hand, it developed from the Jewish-Islamic stress on the will in *God*, as the first principle of creation and individual existence. It was the fusion, in later medieval thought, of these two strains, the theological and the anthropological, or the metaphysical and the psychological, or the objective and the subjective, which terminated in the powerful ascendancy of voluntarism in the West. In terms of the attribution of lineage adopted for our purposes, the one strain represents the more Jewish, the other the more Christian, contribution to what finally emerged. The Jewish factor can be identified as such by its connection with the idea of creation, as well as by its prior appearance in the Arabic-Jewish orbit; we have dealt with it as much as space permits. The Christian or Augustinian factor, bound up with the mysteries of original sin, faith, and grace, was in itself less directly "philosophical" in import, but the enormous stress it laid on the subjective life interpreted in volitional terms could not fail to shape the general self-consciousness of man, and through it also the philosophical interpretation of man. Jewish thinkers were content to stress the freedom of man's will as the counterpart of divine justice: but freedom of the will need not mean its primacy; and on Jewish premises there is no reason for "radical" voluntarism, that is to say for focusing the total essence of man in the unfathomable doings and events of his will. Nor, in Jewish thought, is the eternal salvation of the individual soul the total object of divine concern; nor, for that matter, did the moderate Jewish suspicion of nature ever reach anything like the radical distrust of nature that went with the dualistic mood of Christianity. We may note here that Judaism, radical as it could be on occasion, is not intrinsically wedded to extremism. But the "Cross" is an extreme conception to begin with; and in the Pauline version adopted by Augustine, it centers all of eschatology in the personal reenactment by each individual will of this extremity of divine death and resurrection. This was one existential meaning that could be given to the doctrine of incarnation. To summarize: although both voluntarism and individualism were native to the Jewish position in its confrontation with the Hellenic one, we find both—and the issues they posed—immeasurably sharpened in the Christian ambient.

As to individualism, its battle was fought and won in the struggle between nominalism and realism, that long medieval conflict over the status of universals which is very much part of our story but which can only be alluded to here. Voluntarism independently found its most powerful statement in Duns Scotus, the greatest of the Augustinians who countered Thomas's Aristotelian synthesis.

Duns Scotus claims the primacy of the will on both the human and the divine plane. On the human plane, this means that will exercises dominion over the intellect. Will determines the otherwise neutral thought to the contemplation of this or that object; and when thought in turn determines volition by its insights, it does so in the

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service of the overarching will that activates it from the first. Will, in other words, sets intellect its task, causes it to act, and employs it for its end. Instead of the "active intellect" of Aristotelianism, we have here the "active will" as the principle which moves the passive intellect. And willing in turn has no other cause but itself; it is free in radical indeterminacy.

Together with this elevation in rank goes a vast extension of the area in which the will must make its decisions, unaided by the intellect. Scotus's list of what is rationally undemonstrable engulfs most of the propositions of natural theology, which together with the specifically Christian mysteries are now relegated to faith—a mode of the will. Indeed, beatitude itself is placed in the volitional sphere and not, as by Thomas, in the intellect. This shift breaks with a millennial tradition that had understood consummate bliss to consist of a state of knowledge.

Even more pregnant with philosophical consequences is Scotus's doctrine of the primacy of will in God. It is absolutely sovereign, the sole cause of His willing, and bound by no rules other than those of logic. Accordingly, the laws of nature and of morality are as they are by mere decree of the divine will, and could as well be otherwise: "His will is the supreme rule."

Let us consider what this doctrine implies as to the nature of the moral law. Almost at the beginning of the philosophical tradition, Socrates (in Plato's *Euthyphro*) raises the question of whether "the holy" is holy because it is pleasing to the gods, or whether it is pleasing to the gods because it is holy. The question addresses itself to the intrinsic nature of "holiness" and the like, and more basically still to the problem of whether or not there is such a "nature" independent of anyone's pleasure and choice. In Socrates's case the answer could not be in doubt. Given the many gods, and the frequent disagreements among them, the knowledge of what is holy and unholy, honorable and dishonorable, right and wrong, cannot be derived from the accidents of such pleasure and displeasure, even though they be divine; on the contrary, divine pleasure and displeasure must be based on, and if need be judged by, the knowledge of what is right and wrong in itself. The implication is that there are essences of these things, binding in their validity even on the gods; or, that there is a realm of truth entirely beyond the realm of power. The Socratic answer stood up for over a thousand years of "essentialist" tradition in Western philosophy.

Monotheism, however, somewhat altered the conditions of the question. With the many gods gone, the question affected the conception of the omnipotence of the one God, which would be less than absolute if limited by the laws of eternal reason. And so Duns Scotus, having reversed the classical order by which the will in God was subordinated to His intellect, and therefore determined by its immutable verities, concluded that the biblical commandments were morally valid because He willed them, not that he willed them because they were morally valid. The goodness of anything apart from God consists in its being willed by Him. And by virtue of God's absolute power, another moral order would also be possible.

What is of importance for the subsequent evolution of thought is the connection here established between value, will, and power. The will to set values and the power to make them law are jointly at the bottom of all operative norms. When linked to divine wisdom, this source of moral law is still in safe hands which man can trust. Nevertheless, the meaning of law as such has changed, and God's purely positive will and power becomes its sole available ground, God's wisdom being inscrutable. But when that ground vanishes, as it does with the vanishing of faith, there is only *man's* will and power to ground any norm or law. In the Socratic answer, the commandments would stand even without God, based as they are on intelligible essences; in the Scotist answer, they collapse without God unless another will steps in and takes over their guardianship. Man inherits the role of creator and guardian of values, with no light to guide his choice, since he is not wise and has no vision of eternal wisdom on which to draw. This is a profoundly paradoxical outcome of what had begun as a pious self-abnegation and a giving of all honor to God. First the ancient distinction between laws valid "by nature" (therefore immutable) and laws "instituted" (therefore mutable) was obliterated by the creationist-voluntarist creed for which everything was "instituted" and the distinction became that between divine and human institution. Then this distinction in turn, when its creedal support was withdrawn and its divine term vanished, collapsed into the remaining, human term, and man's lawgiving alone, immersed in the flux of his being, was left in possession of the field. This was the potential dynamite in the Scotistic-plus-nominalistic turn with which the Middle Ages passed over into the Modern Age.

Many obvious, and not so obvious, lines extend from these considerations to salient phenomena of later philosophy, down to our own, post-Christian era. One has only to recall the Baconian nexus of knowledge, power, and the kingdom of man; the Cartesian ego and the suspicion of the deceiving demon; Nietzsche's will to power; and the philosophy of Heidegger. But in this connection one must also remember Kant's majestic effort to synthesize voluntarism and rationalism. That effort culminated in his categorical imperative (surely of Hebrew vintage), grounded in the autonomy of the moral will (a transformed Christian doctrine), but objectively valid because this will is itself reason and thus universal—a classical conception.

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The case of Kant shows, what the examination of other thinkers would show as well, that the original, classical-intellectualist source of the philosophical tradition never ceased to flow and to provide the mainstream into which the Jewish-Christian catalysts injected themselves. The last great reassertion of that tradition was at the same time the grandest bid at reconciliation with the other side: Hegel's dialectical system, which at the very moment when the Christian source began to dry up, at last gave philosophical room to the one distinctly Christian teaching which philosophy had never ventured to assimilate before: the doctrine of the incarnated God. It is true that this doctrine is not easily recognized in the eschatological philosophies of history into which Hegel and his successors transformed it. But this aftermath—the ultimate in the secularization of a theology—would require a separate discussion. Here I can only indicate my unargued opinion that, all Jewish messianism notwithstanding, the idea of history as a self-operative vehicle of redemption is much more of Christian than Jewish provenance. One may see in it the transmuted form of the Holy Ghost doing his work through man in the interval between the incarnation and the second coming.

If, in looking back over the road we have taken, we find that our attempted differentiation between "Jewish" and "Christian" elements did not always succeed, this is only what was to be expected in the nature of the case. But whatever may be the verdict on the particular attributions proposed, one truth should have impressed itself on us: that the shadow which these past things cast is long indeed and still lies upon our present scene. And perhaps our discussion has enabled us to see better how it is due to a unique historical configuration, the meeting of Athens and Jerusalem, each itself a unique fact, that Western mankind has taken a road so different from that of any other civilization. To the accident of this meeting (though not to it alone) we can trace the unique combination of rationalism and voluntarism, individualism and activism, of which we have yet to decide whether it is a blessing or a curse, but through which, to the vexation of ourselves and the world, we have become what we are.

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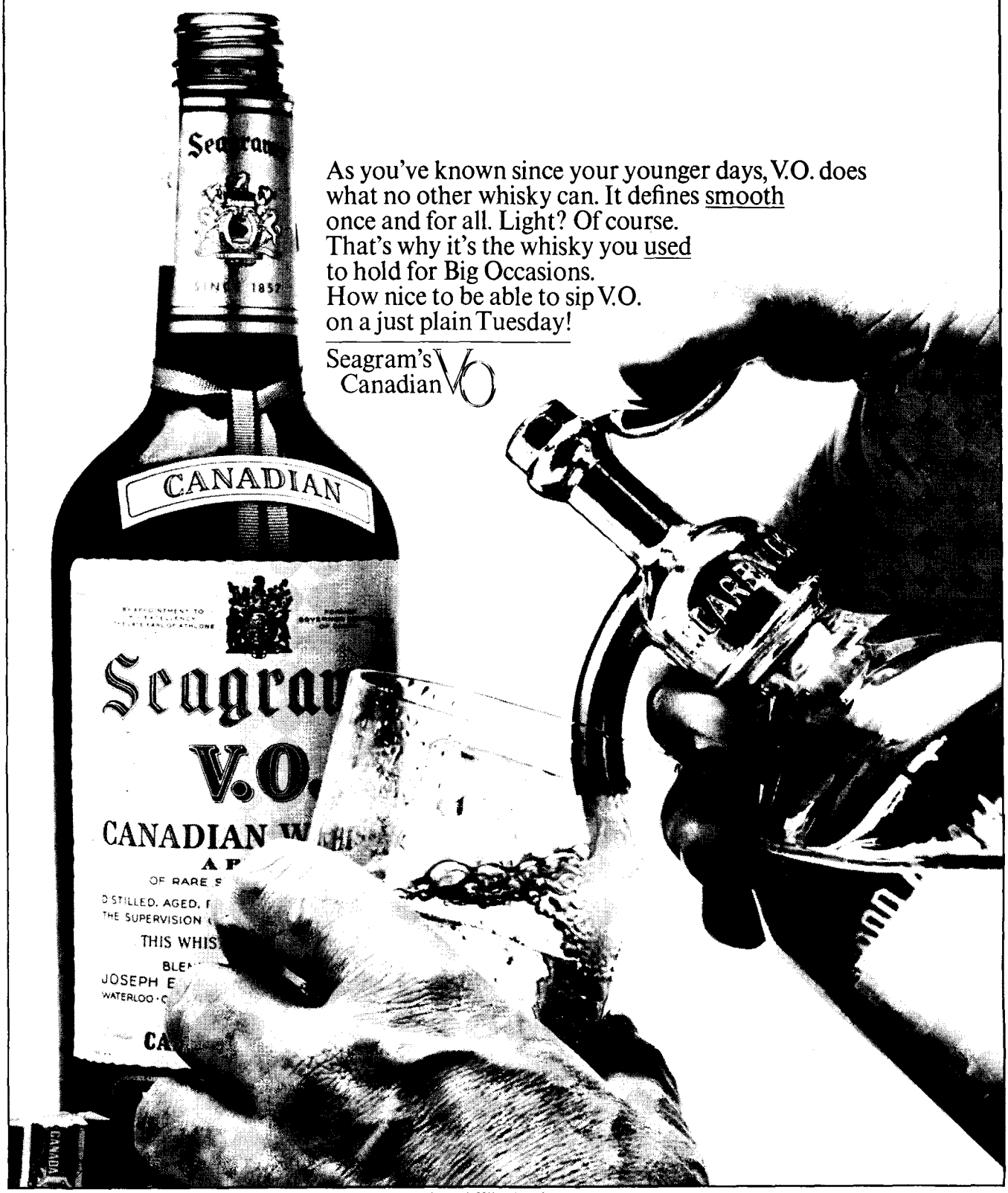

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ELLEN WILLIS

THE SOUND OF BOB DYLAN

A YEAR AGO August, Bob Dylan had a motorcycle accident. Reports of his condition were vague, and he dropped out of sight. Publication of his book, *Tarantula,* was postponed indefinitely. New records appeared, but they were all taken from his last album, *Blonde on Blonde.* Gruesome rumors circulated: Dylan was dead; he was badly disfigured; he was paralyzed; he was insane. The cataclysm his audience was always expecting seemed to have arrived. (Topical singer Phil Ochs had predicted that Dylan might someday be assassinated by a fan. Pete Seeger believed Dylan could become the country's greatest troubadour, if he didn't explode. Alan Lomax had once remarked that Dylan might develop into a great poet of the times, unless he killed himself first.) As months passed, reflex apprehension turned to suspense, then irritation: had we been put on again? We had. Friends began to admit, with smiles, that they'd seen Bobby; he was rewriting his book; he was about to sign a contract with MGM Records. The new rumor was that the accident had been a cover for retreat. After *Blonde on Blonde,* his intensive foray into the pop demi-monde, Dylan needed time to replenish his imagination. According to a less romantic version, he was keeping quiet till his contracts expired.

The confusion was typical. Not since Rimbaud said, "I is another," has an artist been so obsessed with escaping identity. His masks hidden by other masks, Dylan is the celebrity-stalker's ultimate antagonist. The original disparity between his public pose as rootless wanderer with southwestern drawl and the private facts of middle-class Jewish family and high school diploma in Hibbing, Minnesota, was a commonplace subterfuge, the kind that pays reporters' salaries. It hardly showed his talent for elusiveness; what it probably showed was naivete. But his attitude toward himself as a public personality was always clear. On an early recording, he used the eloquent pseudonym "Blind Boy Grunt." Dylan is itself a pseudonym, possibly inspired by Dylan Thomas (an ascription Dylan now denies), possibly by a real or imaginary uncle named Dillon, who might or might not be the "Las Vegas dealer" Dylan once claimed was his only living relative.

ELLEN WILLIS, a new contributor, is a young writer whose work has appeared in *Mademoiselle* and the *Saturday Evening Post.*

There is, to be sure, a continuing self, the Bobby Dylan friends describe as shy and defensive, hyped up, careless of his health, a bit scared by fame, unmaterialistic but shrewd about money, a professional absorbed in his craft. Dylan's songs bear the stigmata of an authentic middle-class adolescence; his eye for detail, his sense of humor, and his skill at evoking archetypal sexual skirmishes, show that some part of him is of, as well as in, the world. As further evidence, he has a real wife, a son, and a house in Woodstock, New York. But his refusal to be known is not simply a celebrity's ploy. As his songs become more introspective, the introspections become more impersonal, the confidences of a no-man without past or future. Bob Dylan as identifiable *persona* has disappeared into his songs. This terrifies his audiences. They could accept a consistent image in lieu of the "real" Bob Dylan, but his progressive self-annihilation cannot be contained in a game of let's pretend. Instead of an image, Dylan has created a magic theater from which his public cannot escape.

IN FIVE YEARS, Dylan's stance has evolved from proletarian assertiveness to anarchist *Angst* to pop detachment. At each stage he has made himself harder to follow, provoked howls of execration from those left behind, and attracted an ever-larger, more demanding audience. He has reacted with growing hostility to the possessiveness of this audience and its shock troops, the journalists, the professional categorizers. His baroque press conference inventions are extensions of his work, full of imaginative truth and virtually devoid of information. The classic Dylan interview appeared in *Playboy,* where Nat Hentoff, like a housewife dusting her furniture while a tornado wrecks the house, pursued the homely fact through exchanges like: "Do you have any unfulfilled ambitions?" "Well, I guess I've always wanted to be Anthony Quinn in *La Strada.* . . . I guess I've always wanted to be Brigitte Bardot, too; but I don't really want to think about *that* too much." Sometimes Dylan gets nasty. In *Don't Look Back,* the film documentary of his 1964 English tour, he harangues a pathetic *Time* reporter in a mean-spirited inversion of *noblesse oblige.*

Many people hate Bob Dylan because they hate being fooled. Illusion is fine, if quarantined and diagnosed as mild; otherwise it is potentially humiliating (Is he laughing at me? Conning me

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out of my money?). Some discount Dylan as merely a popular culture hero (how can a teen-age idol be a serious artist?—at most, perhaps, a serious demagogue). But the most tempting answer to such charges—forget his public presence, listen to his songs—won't do in this case, for Dylan has exploited his image as a vehicle for artistic statement. (The same is true of Andy Warhol and, to a lesser degree, of the Beatles and Allen Ginsberg; in contrast, James Dean and Marilyn Monroe were creatures, not masters, of their images.) The tenacity of the modern publicity apparatus often makes artists' personalities more familiar than their work, while its pervasiveness obscures the work of those who cannot or will not be personalities. If there is an audience for images, artists will inevitably use the image as a medium—and some images are more original, more compelling, more relevant than others. Dylan has self-consciously explored the possibilities of mass communication just as the pop artists explored the possibilities of mass production. In the same sense that pop art is about commodities, Dylan's art is about celebrity.

This is not to deny the intrinsic value of Dylan's songs. Everyone interested in folk and popular music agrees on their importance, if not on their merit. As composer, interpreter, most of all as lyricist, Dylan has made a revolution. He expanded folk idiom into a rich, figurative language, grafted literary and philosophical subtleties onto the protest song, revitalized folk vision by rejecting proletarian and ethnic sentimentality, then all but destroyed pure folk as a contemporary form by merging it with pop. Rock-and-roll, already in the midst of a creative flowering dominated by British rock and the smooth Negro Motown sound, was transformed. Songwriters raided folk music as never before for new sounds, new images, new subject matter. Dylan's innovative lyrics were enthusiastically imitated. Ever since, his profligate talents have been a major influence in popular music. The folk-music lovers who managed to evolve with him, the connoisseurs of pop, the bohemian fringe of the literary community, the turned-on searchers after absolute experience, and of course teenagers consider him a genius, a prophet. Folk purists and political radicals, who were inspired by his earlier material, cry betrayal with a vehemence that acknowledges his gifts.

Yet many of Dylan's fans—especially ex-fans—miss the point. Dylan is no apostle of the electronic age. Rather, he is a fifth-columnist from the past, shaped by personal and political non-conformity, by blues and modern poetry. He has imposed his commitment to individual freedom (and its obverse, isolation) on the hip passivity of pop culture, his literacy on an illiterate music. He has used the publicity machine to demonstrate his belief in privacy. His songs and public role are guides to survival in the world of the image, the cool, and the high. And in coming to terms with that world, he has forced it to come to terms with him.

By 1960, the folk music revival that began in the 50's had expanded into an all-inclusive smorgasbord, with kitschy imitation-folk groups at one end, resurrected cigar-box guitarists and Ozark balladeers at the other. Of music that pretended to ethnic authenticity, the most popular was folk blues—Leadbelly, Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee, Lightnin' Hopkins. The widespread enthusiasm for blues was in part a tribute to the ascendancy of rock-and-roll—in the 50's, Negro rhythms had affected the consciousness of every teenager in the land. But blues, unlike rock, was free of identification with the dominant society. Its sexuality and rebelliousness were undiluted, and its subject matter was people, not teenagers. Besides, the Negro, always a symbol of both suffering and life-force, was gaining new political importance, and folk blues expressed the restlessness of activists, bohemians, déclassé intellectuals. Since younger Negro performers were not interested in preserving a genre they had abandoned for more distinctly urban forms, white city singers tried to fill the gap. Patronized unmercifully by blues purists, the best of them went beyond the simple approximation of Negro sounds to evoke personal pain and disenchantment with white culture.

At the same time, there was a surge of folk composing. The Weavers, in the vanguard of the revival, had popularized the iconoclastic ballads and talking blues of Woody Guthrie, chronicler of the dust bowl and depression, the open road, the unions, the common man as intrepid endurer. Pete Seeger, the Weavers' lead singer in the early days and the most prestigious folk musician in the country, had recorded albums of topical songs from the 30's and 40's. With the emergence of the civil-rights movement, freedom songs, some new, some updated spirituals and union chants, began coming out of the South. Northern musicians began to write and perform their own material, mainly variations on the hard-traveling theme and polemics against racism, the bomb, and middle-class conformity. Guthrie was their godfather, Seeger their guru, California songwriter Malvina Reynolds their older sister. Later they were to acquire an angel—Joan Baez, who would record their songs and sing them at racial demonstrations and peace rallies; an organ—*Broadside*, a mimeographed magazine founded in 1962; and a sachem—Bob Dylan.

Gerde's Folk City, an unassuming, unbohemian cabaret in Greenwich Village, was the folk fans' chief New York hangout. On Monday, hootenanny night, blues interpreters like Dave Van Ronk, bluegrass groups like the Greenbriar Boys, the new topical songwriters—Tom Paxton, Phil Ochs, Len Chandler—would stop in and perform. Established singers came because Gerde's was part

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of the scene, because they enjoyed playing to the aficionados who gathered after midnight. The young ones came for a showcase and for contact with musicians they admired.

When Bob Dylan first showed up at Gerde's in the spring of 1961, fresh-skinned and baby-faced and wearing a schoolboy's corduroy cap, the manager asked him for proof of age. He was nineteen, only recently arrived in New York, skinny, nervous, and manic; the bohemian patina of jeans and boots, scruffy hair, hip jargon, and hitchhiking mileage barely settled on nice Bobby Zimmerman. He had been trying to catch on at the coffeehouses. His material and style were a cud of half-digested influences: Guthrie cum Elliott; Blind Lemon Jefferson cum Leadbelly cum Van Ronk; the hillbilly sounds of Hank Williams and Jimmie Rodgers; the rock-and-roll of Chuck Berry and Elvis Presley. He was constantly writing new songs. On stage, he alternated between poignancy and clownishness. His interpretations of traditional songs—especially blues—were pretentious, and his harsh, flat voice kept slipping over the edge of plaintiveness into strident self-pity. But he shone as a comedian, charming audiences with Charlie Chaplin routines, playing with his hair and cap, burlesquing his own mannerisms, and simply enjoying himself. His specialty was composing lightly sardonic talking blues—chants to a bass run guitar accompaniment, a favorite vehicle of Woody Guthrie's: "Them Communists were all around/ in the air and on the ground/ . . . I run down most hurriedly/ and joined the John Birch society."

That fall, Robert Shelton, folk music critic for the New York *Times*, visited Gerde's and gave Dylan an enthusiastic review. Columbia Records signed him and released a mediocre first album in February, 1962. It contained only two Dylan compositions, both non-political (Columbia had decided protest was not commercial). Dylan began publishing his topical songs in *Broadside*. Like his contemporaries, he was more propagandist than artist; his syntax was often barbarous, his diction crude. Even so, his work stood out—it contained the most graphic descriptions of racial atrocities. But Dylan also had a gentler mood. Road songs like "Song to Woody" strove—rather unsuccessfully—for Guthrie's expressive understatement and simple, traditional sound.

In May 1962, *Broadside* published a new Dylan song:

How many roads must a man walk down
before you call him a man?
How many seas must a white dove sail before she
sleeps in the sand?
How many times must the cannonballs fly before
they're forever banned?
The answer, my friend, is blowing in the wind,
*the answer is blowing in the wind.**

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Set to a melody adapted from a spiritual, "Blowin' in the Wind" combined indignation with Guthriesque simplicity and added a touch of original imagery. It received little circulation until nearly a year later, when Peter, Paul, and Mary, a slick folk trio, heard Dylan sing it at a coffeehouse. Their recording of the song sold a million copies, inspired more than fifty other versions, and established topical song as the most important development of the folk revival. The relative subtlety of the lyric made the topical movement aesthetically self-conscious. It did not drive out direct political statements—Dylan himself continued to write such statements—but it set a standard that could not be ignored. Topical songs began to show more wit, more craftsmanship, more variety.

"Blowin' in the Wind" was included in Dylan's second album, *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan*, which appeared in May 1963. This time, nearly all the songs were his own; five had political themes. It was an extraordinary record. The influences had coalesced; the voice, unmusical as ever, had found an evocative range somewhere between abrasion and sentimentality; the lyrics (except for "Masters of War," a simplistic diatribe against munitions-makers) were vibrant and pithy. The album contained what may still be Dylan's best song—"It's A Hard Rain's a-Gonna Fall," a vivid evocation of nuclear apocalypse that owed much to Allen Ginsberg's biblical rhetoric and declamatory style. Its theme was modern, its spirit ancient. At first hearing, most of the *Freewheelin'* songs sounded less revolutionary than they were: so skillfully had Dylan distilled the forms and moods of traditional music that his originality took time to register.

Freewheelin' illuminated Dylan's America—or rather, two Americas. "Hard Rain" confronted the underside, "where the executioner's face is always well-hidden," "where black is the color and none is the number," a world of deserted diamond highways, incipient tidal waves, clowns crying in alleys, children armed with guns and swords, "ten thousand whisperin and nobody listenin" and occasional portents of redemption: "I met a young girl, she gave me a rainbow." The satirical "Talking World War III Blues" toured the country's surface: hot-dog stands, parking meters, Cadillacs, rock-and-roll singers, telephone operators, cool females, officious doctors. Dylan's moral outrage coexisted with a grudging affection for American society and its foibles. Alongside "Masters of War," there was "I Shall Be Free": "My telephone rang, it would not stop, it was President Kennedy callin me up./ He said my friend Bob what do we need to make this country grow I said my friend John, Brigitte Bardot."

For a time, the outrage predominated. Dylan's output of bitter protest increased and his humor receded. He was still learning from Woody Guthrie, but he often substituted despair for Guthrie's resilience: his finest ballads chronicled

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the disintegration of an unemployed miner's family; the killing of a Negro maid, punished by a six-month sentence; the extremity of a penniless farmer who shot himself, his wife, and five kids. At the same time, his prophetic songs discarded the pessimism of "Hard Rain" for triumph in "The Times They Are a-Changin'" and vindictiveness in "When the Ship Comes In": "Then they'll raise their hands, say we'll meet all your demands/ and we'll shout from the bow, your days are numbered."

It was Dylan's year. Stimulated by the wide acceptance of his work, inspired by his ideas and images, topical songwriters became more and more prolific. Dylan songs were recorded by dozens of folk singers, notably Joan Baez (at whom he had once sneered, "She's still singing about Mary Hamilton. Where's that at?"). No folk concert was complete without "Hard Rain," or "Don't Think Twice," or a protest song from Dylan's third album, *The Times They Are A-Changin'*. The college folk crowd imitated Dylan; civil-rights workers took heart from him; masochistic journalists lionized him. And in the attenuated versions of Peter, Paul, and Mary, the Chad Mitchell Trio, even Lawrence Welk, his songs reached the fraternity house and the suburb.

Then Dylan yanked the rug: he renounced political protest. He put out an album of personal songs, and in one of them, "My Back Pages," scoffed at his previous moral absolutism. His refrain—"Ah, but I was so much older then, I'm younger than that now"—seemed a slap at the 30's Left. And the song contained scraps of uncomfortably private imagery—hints of aesthetic escapism?

Folk devotees were shocked at Dylan's apostasy. Folk music and social protest have always fed on each other, and the current revival had been political all along. For children of depression activists growing up in the Eisenhower slough, folk music was a way of keeping the faith. When they converged on the Weavers' Town Hall hootenannies, they came as an anti-McCarthy resistance, pilgrims to the shrine of the 30's. The Weavers had been blacklisted for alleged Communist connections; Pete Seeger had been *there*, singing for the unions, for the Spanish Republic. It didn't matter what they sang—in the atmosphere of conspiratorial sympathy that permeated those performances, even "Greensleeves" had radical overtones. Later, as the Left revived, folk singing became a badge of involvement, an expression of solidarity, and most important, a history-in-the-raw of social and political struggle. Now, Dylan's defection threatened the last aesthetically respectable haven for believers in proletarian art.

Dylan had written personal songs before, but they were songs that accepted folk conventions. Narrative in impulse, nostalgic but restless in mood, their central image was the road and its imperative. They complemented his protest songs: Here was an outlaw, unable to settle for one place, one girl, a merely private life, committed to that symbolic onward journey. His new songs were more psychological, limning characters and relationships. They substituted ambition for the artless perfection of his best early songs; "It Ain't Me, Babe," a gloss on the spiritual possessiveness of women, took three stanzas to say what "Don't Think Twice, It's All Right" had suggested in a few phrases: "I'm thinking and wonderin', walkin' down the road/ I once loved a woman, a child I'm told/ gave her my heart but she wanted my soul." Dylan's language was opening up—doves sleeping in the sand were one thing, "crimson flames tied through my ears" quite another. And his tone was also changing: in his love songs, ingenuousness began to yield to self-possession, the spontaneity of the road to the gamesmanship of the city. These were transitional songs, full of half-realized ideas; having rejected the role of people's bard, Dylan had yet to find a new niche.

In retrospect, Dylan's break with the topical song movement seemed inevitable. He had modeled himself on Woody Guthrie, whose incessant traveling was an emotional as well as an economic necessity, whose commitment to radical politics was rooted in an individualism as compulsive as Dylan's own. But Guthrie had had to organize or submit; Dylan had other choices. For Guthrie, the road was habitat; for Dylan, metaphor. The closing of the iron mines had done to Hibbing what drought had done to Guthrie's Oklahoma, but while Guthrie had been a victim, Dylan was a bystander. A voluntary refugee from middle-class life, more aesthete than activist, he had less in common with the Left than with literary rebels—Blake, Whitman, Rimbaud, Crane, Ginsberg.

The beauty of "Hard Rain" was that it exploited poetry while remaining a folk lyric, simple, repetitive, seemingly uncontrived. Now Dylan became self-consciously poetic, adopting a neo-beat style loaded with images. Though he had rejected traditional political categories, his new posture was if anything more scornful of the social order than before. "It's Alright, Ma (I'm Only Bleeding)" attacked both the "human gods" who "make everything from toy guns that spark to flesh-colored Christs that glow in the dark" and their acquiescent victim, who "gargles in the rat-race choir." "Gates of Eden," like "Hard Rain," descended into a surreal netherworld, the menace this time a psychic bomb, the revolt of repressed instinct: "The motorcycle black madonna two-wheeled gypsy queen/ and her silver-studded phantom cause the gray flannel dwarf to scream." As poetry these songs were overrated—*Howl* had said it all much better—and they were unmusical, near-chants declaimed to a monotonous guitar strum. Yet the perfunctory music made the bohemian commonplaces work—made them fresh.

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Perhaps it was the context: though few people realized it yet, the civil-rights movement was losing its moral force; the Vietnam juggernaut was becoming the personal concern of every draft-eligible man; a new generation of bohemians, more expansive and less cynical than the beats, was about to blossom. The time was right for a reaffirmation of individual revolt.

But Dylan had also been exposed to a very different vision: in May, 1964, he had toured an England transformed by mod fashion and the unprecedented excitement over the Beatles and the Rolling Stones. When his new record came out the following spring, its title was *Bringing It All Back Home*. On the album jacket, a chiaroscuro Dylan, bright face emerging from ominous shadows, stared accusingly at the viewer. In black suit and striped shirt, he perched on a long divan, hugging a cat, behind him a modish, blank-faced beauty in scarlet lounging pajamas. The room, wreathed in light and dominated by a baroque mantelpiece, abounded with artifacts—*Time,* a movie magazine, a fallout shelter sign, folk and pop records (including earlier Dylan), a portrait, a candlestick, a few mysterious objects obscured by the halo.

Most of side one was devoted to "Gates of Eden" and "It's Alright, Ma." But the most arresting cut on the side was "Mr. Tambourine Man," a hymn to the psychedelic quest: "take me disappearing through the smoke-rings of my mind/ down the foggy ruins of time/ . . . take me on a trip upon your magic swirling ship." Drug-oriented bohemians loved it; it was another step away from the sobersides. It was also more like a folk song than anything Dylan had written since giving up politics, a spiritual road song with lilting, singable melody.

The other side was rock-and-roll, Dylan on electric guitar and piano backed by a five-man band. It was not hard rock. There was no overdubbing, and Dylan played his amplified guitar folk-style. But the beat was there, and the sound, if not overwhelming, was big enough to muffle some of the lyrics. These dispensed a new kind of folk wisdom. Chaos had become a condition, like the weather, not to analyze or prophesy but to gripe about, cope with, dodge: "Look out, kid, it's somethin you did/ God knows when but you're doin it again." The message was: pay attention to what's happening—"Don't follow leaders, watch the parkin meters."

One rock song, "Subterranean Homesick Blues," was released as a single. As Dylan's pop debut it was a modest success, hovering halfway up the *Cash Box* and *Billboard* charts. That summer, Dylan cut "Like a Rolling Stone," the most scurrilous and, with its powerful beat, the most dramatic in a long line of non-love songs beginning with "Don't Think Twice":

You used to ride on the chrome horse with your diplomat
who carried on his shoulder a Siamese cat
ain't it hard when you discovered that he wasn't really where it's at
*after he took from you everything he could steal.**

It was a number one hit, as "Blowin' in the Wind" had been two years before—only now it was Dylan's own expressive snarl coming over radio and jukebox.

"Rolling Stone" opened Dylan's first all-rock album, *Highway 61 Revisited.* More polished but less daring than *Bringing It All Back Home,* the album reworked familiar motifs. The title song, which depicted the highway as junkyard, temple, and arena for war, was Dylan's best face-of-America commentary since "Talking World War III Blues." The witty and scarifying "Ballad of a Thin Man," which derided the rationalist bewildered by the instinctual revolt, was an updated "Times They Are a-Changin'," with battle lines redrawn according to pop morality. Dylan did not hail the breakdown of sanity he described but merely kept his cool, mocking Mr. Jones (the pop equivalent of Mr. Charlie) for his squareness: "The sword-swallower he comes up to you and then he kneels/ . . . and he says here is your throat back, thanks for the loan/ and something is happening but you don't know what it is, do you, Mr. Jones?" "Desolation Row" was Dylan's final tribute to the *Götterdämmerung* strain in modern literature—an eleven-minute freak show whose cast of losers, goons, and ghosts wanders around in a miasma of sexual repression and latent violence underscored by the electronic beat: "Einstein disguised as Robin Hood . . . / passed this way an hour ago with his friend, a jealous monk/ now he looked so immaculately frightful as he bummed a cigarette/ then he went off sniffing drainpipes and reciting the alphabet."

The violent hostility of traditionalists to Dylan's rock-and-roll made the previous uproar over "My Back Pages" seem mild. Even bohemians called him a sellout and a phony. At the July 1965 Newport Folk Festival, he appeared with his electric guitar and was booed off the stage. Alan Lomax, America's foremost authority on folk song, felt Dylan had chucked his artistry for a big audience and forsaken a mature culture for one that was evanescent and faddish. Tom Paxton, dean of the 60's topical songwriters, commented: " 'Where it's at' is a synonym for 'rich.' "

Defiantly, Dylan exacerbated the furor, insisting on his contempt for message songs and his indifference to causes, refusing to agonize over his wealth or his taxes ("Uncle Sam, he's my *uncle*! Can't turn your back on a member of the family!"). In one notorious interview, he claimed he had written topical songs only to get published in *Broadside* and attract attention. Many former

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fans took the bait. Actually, Dylan's work still bristled with messages; his "opportunism" had absorbed three years of his life and produced the finest extensions of traditional music since Guthrie. But the purists believed Bob Dylan because they wanted to, although their passion told less about Dylan than about their own compound of aristocratic and proletarian sensitivities. For them, popular music—especially rock-and-roll—symbolized the displacement of the true folk by the mass. Rock was not created by the people but purveyed by the communications industry. The performer was incidental to the engineer and the publicity man. The beat was moronic, the lyrics banal teen-age trivia.

These were half-truths. From the beginning, there had been a bottom-up as well as a top-down movement in rock-and-roll. Negro kids from Harlem, Italian kids from Philadelphia, formed groups and wrote songs; white country singers adopted the rhythm-and-blues beat of urban Negroes. Rock-and-roll united teen-agers from Watts to Malibu, from Detroit to Dallas. In its own way it was a music of protest—not against a mechanized, acquisitive society, which it took for granted, but against the arbitrariness of parents and teachers, the lack of sympathy for youthful energy and love and sex. The mediocrity of most performers only made rock-and-roll more authentic—anyone could sing it—and one of the few remaining vindications of the American dream—any kid from the slums might become a millionaire. (The best singers, of course, were fine interpreters; Elvis Presley and Chuck Berry did not have golden voices, but neither did Leadbelly or Woody Guthrie.) Rock-and-roll was further from the grass roots than traditional music, but closer than any other kind of pop. If the sentimentalists did not recognize this, the average adult did—hence his condemnation of the music for its adolescent surliness and its sexuality, covert in the lyrics, overt in the beat and in the intense response of the audience to its idols.

But it remained for the British renaissance to prove that the mainstream of mass culture could produce folk music—that is, anti-establishment music. The Beatles, commercial without apology, delighted in the Americanized decadence of their environment. Yet their enthusiasm was subversive—they endorsed the reality of the culture, not its official myths. The Rolling Stones were iconoclastic in a different way: deliberately ugly, blatantly erotic, they exuded contempt for the public while making a fortune. Their cynicism, like Leadbelly's violence or Charlie Parker's heroin, was part of their charisma; unlike traditional folk singers, they could cheerfully censor their lyrics for Ed Sullivan without seeming domesticated—the effect was more as if they had paraded a sign saying "Blank CBS." British rock was far superior to most early rock-and-roll. Times had changed: electronic techniques were more sophisticated; radio stations and record companies were less squeamish about sexual candor; teen culture was merging into a more mature, less superficial youth culture with semi-bohemian tastes. Most important, the British groups successfully assimilated Negro music, neither vitiating rhythm-and-blues nor imitating it, but refining it to reflect their own milieu: white, lower-class, urban, technological, materialistic, toughminded.

MOST FOLK FANS—even those with no intrinsic objections to rock, who had perhaps listened to it as teenagers when they were not obliged to be serious—assumed that commercial exploitation automatically gutted music. Yet the Rolling Stones were creating blues as valid as those of any folk singers, Negro or white. After *Bringing It All Back Home*, the contradiction could no longer be ignored, and those not irrevocably committed to the traditional folk ethos saw the point. Phil Ochs praised *Highway 61*; Joan Baez cut a rock-and-roll record; more and more folk singers began to use electronic instruments. Folk-rock generated an unaccustomed accord between the folk and pop worlds. In the rock-and-roll magazine *Crawdaddy!*, the late folk-composer Richard Fariña lauded "this shift away from open-road-protest-flatpick-style to more Nashville-Motown-Thameside, with the strong implication that some of us had been listening to the A.M. radio." Malvina Reynolds pronounced the new rock-and-roll "a wonder and delight." By November 1966, folk-rock had received the final imprimatur—Pete Seeger recorded an album backed by three members of a rock group, the Blues Project.

Folk-rock is not a form, but a simpleminded inspiration responsible for all sorts of hybrids. At first it consisted mostly of rock versions of Dylan folk songs, social protest rock, and generational trauma rock, a weekend-hippie version of the classic formula, children against parents. Then, self-styled musical poets like Simon and Garfunkel began imitating Dylan's apocalyptic songs: "People bowed and prayed/ to the neon god they made/ . . . the words of the prophets are written on a subway wall." A trend to elaborate lyrics suffused popular music, producing some near-poetry and a lot of self-indulgent image-mongering. The "good time sound"—a varying mixture of rock, blues, jug, and old pop—was invented by the Lovin' Spoonful, four versatile, imaginative folk musicians. And there was psychedelic rock, the music of new bohemia. The Byrds, a Los Angeles group, had started folk-rock moving with their hit record of "Mr. Tambourine Man"; later, they wrote "Eight Miles High," which picked up on the Beatles' experiments with Indian instrumentation and was ostensibly about flying over London airport (it was banned anyway by right-thinking disc-jockeys). Since then a proliferation of groups, mostly from California, has begun making psychedelic music, a catch-all label for a variety of prod-

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ucts influenced by folk, British rock, Chicago blues, jazz, Indian music, and Dylanesque imagery. Psychedelic lyrics superimpose on the conventions of the pop love song a lofty amalgam of eros and agape; they focus on the trip—especially the flight—the way folk music focuses on the road. In the past year, groups like Jefferson Airplane, Country Joe and the Fish, and the Grateful Dead have made San Francisco the center of avant-garde pop, superseding Britain.

Psychedelic rock comes closest to making the term folk-rock say something. For hippie culture, bastard of the beat generation out of pop, is much like a folk culture; it is oral, naive, communal, its aphorisms ("Make love, not war," "Turn on, tune in, drop out") intuited rather than rationalized. The hippies simplify the beats' utopian anarchism and substitute psychedelic drugs for Zen and yoga; they also share the pop enthusiasm for technology and the rainbow surface of affluence—their music is rock, their style, mod. Like Dylan, they bridge old culture and new—they are still idealists—and they idolize him. But he does not consider himself their spokesman. At twenty-six, he is too old ("How can I be the voice of their generation? I'm not their generation") and, though he does not admit it publicly, too well-read. While "Mr. Tambourine Man" was becoming the hippie anthem, he was saying "LSD is for mad, hateful people" and making fun of drugs in "Memphis Blues Again." Dylan is really at cross-purposes with the hippies. They are trying to embody pop sensibility in a folk culture. He is trying to comprehend pop culture with—at bottom—a folk sensibility.

It is a truism among Dylan's admirers that he is a poet using rock-and-roll to spread his art: as Jack Newfield put it in the *Village Voice*, "If Whitman were alive today, he too would be playing an electric guitar." This misrepresentation has only served to make many intellectuals suspicious of Dylan and draw predictable sniping from conscientious B-student poets like Louis Simpson and John Ciardi. Dylan has a lavish verbal imagination and a brilliant sense of irony, and many of his images—especially in his last album, *Blonde on Blonde*—are memorable. But poetry also requires economy, coherence, and discrimination, and Dylan has perpetrated prolix verses, horrendous grammar, tangled phrases, silly metaphors, embarrassing clichés, muddled thought; at times he seems to believe one good image deserves five others, and he relies too much on rhyme. His chief literary virtue—sensitivity to psychological nuance—belongs to fiction more than poetry. His skill at creating character has made good lyrics out of terrible poetry, as in the pre-rock "Ballad in Plain D," whose portraits of the singer, his girl, and her family redeem lines like: "With unseen consciousness I possessed in my grip/ a magnificent mantelpiece though its heart being chipped."

Dylan is not always undisciplined. In *Freewheelin'*, *Blonde on Blonde*, and songs like "Ballad of a Thin Man," he proves he can control his material. But his disciplines are songwriting and acting, not poetry; his words fit the needs of music and performance, rather than an intrinsic pattern. Words or rhymes that seem gratuitous in print often make good musical sense, and Dylan's voice, an extraordinary interpreter of emotion though (or, more likely, because) it is almost devoid of melody, makes vague lines clear. Dylan's music is not inspired. His melodies and arrangements are derivative, and his one technical accomplishment, a vivacious, evocative harmonica, does not approach the virtuosity of a Sonny Terry. His strength as a musician lies in his formidable eclecticism combined with a talent for choosing the right music to go with a given lyric. The result is a unity of sound and word that eludes most of his imitators.

Dylan is effective only when exploiting this unity, which is why his free verse album notes are interesting mainly as autobiography (or mythology) and why *Tarantula* is unlikely to be a masterpiece. When critics call Dylan a poet, they really mean visionary. Dylan is specifically pessimistic about the future of literature. Far from Desolation Row, "The Titanic sails at dawn/ . . . Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot fighting in the captain's towers/ while calypso singers laugh at them and fishermen hold flowers." The infamous Mr. Jones, with his pencil in his hand, his eyes in his pocket, and his nose on the ground, is a literary man. With the rock songs in *Bringing It All Back Home*, Dylan began trying to create an alternative to poetry.

In the spring of 1966, Dylan recorded *Blonde on Blonde*, a double album cut in Nashville with local musicians. Formally, it was his finest achievement since *Freewheelin'*, but while the appeal of the *Freewheelin'* songs was the illusion of spontaneous folk expression, the songs from *Blonde on Blonde* were clearly artifacts, lovingly and carefully made. The music was rock and Nashville country, with a sprinkling of blues runs and English-ballad arpeggios. Thematically, the album was a unity. It explored the subworld created by pop, an exotic milieu of velvet doors and scorpions, cool sex ("I saw you makin love with him,/ you forgot to close the garage door"), zany fashions ("it balances on your head just like a mattress balances on a bottle of wine, / your brand-new leopard-skin pill-box hat"), strange potions ("it strangled up my mind,/ now people just get uglier and I have no sense of time"), neurotic women ("she's like all the rest/ with her fog, her amphetamine, and her pearls").

The songs did not preach: Dylan was no longer rebel but seismograph, registering his emotions—fascination, confusion, pity, annoyance, exuberance, anguish—with sardonic lucidity. Only once, in "Just Like a Woman," did his culture shock get

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out of control: "I can't stay in here/ ain't it clear/ that I just can't fit/ . . . please don't let on that you knew me when/ I was hungry, and it was your world." Many of the songs were about child-women, bitchy, unreliable, sometimes vulnerable, usually one step ahead: "I told you as you clawed out my eyes/ I never really meant to do you any harm." But there were also goddesses like Johanna and the mercury-mouthed, silken-fleshed Sad-Eyed Lady of the Lowlands, Beatrices of pop who shed not merely light but kaleidoscopic images: "these visions of Johanna are now all that remain."

POP CULTURE defines man as a receiver of stimuli, his environment as sensory patterns to be enjoyed rather than interpreted (literature and philosophy are irrelevant) or acted upon (politics is irrelevant). "If you want to understand me, look at my surface," says Andy Warhol. And, "I like my paintings because anybody can do them." The pop artist looks at mass culture naively and sees beauty in its regular patterns; like an anthropologist exhibiting Indian basket-weaving, Warhol shows us our folk art—soup cans. His message—the Emperor has no clothes, but that's all right, in fact it's beautiful—takes the acceptance of image for essence to its logical extreme. *Blonde on Blonde* is about this love of surface.

Dylan's sensitivity to pop comes straight out of his folk background. Both folk and pop mentalities are leery of abstractions, and Dylan's appreciation of surface detail represents Guthriesque common sense—to Dylan, a television commercial was always a television commercial as well as a symbol of alienation. From the first, a basic pragmatism tempered his commitment to the passionate excesses of the revolutionist and the *poète-maudit* and set him apart from hipster heroes like James Dean. Like the beats, who admired the total revolt of the hipster from a safe distance, Dylan is essentially non-violent. Any vengefulness in his songs is either impersonal or funny, like the threats of a little boy to beat up the bad guys; more often, he is the bemused butt of slapstick cruelty: "I've got a woman, she's so mean/ sticks my boots in the washing machine/ sticks me with buckshot when I'm nude/ puts bubble-gum in my food."

After more than a year of absence from the scene, Dylan is still revered; his silence has in fact solidified his status. Whether he can come back as an active performer is another question. Rock, which has become more and more complex and "serious" while managing to remain just this side of decadence, may have left him behind. (It is reported that he listened to the first few cuts of the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, an album that has received the attention once reserved for major novels, and snapped "Turn that off!") Then again, as those ubiquitous rumors have it, he may be leaving rock behind. Many of Dylan's associates—notably Tom Wilson, his former A & R man—insist that Dylan has much greater musical sophistication than he has ever bothered to show. In May, a *Daily News* reporter quoted Dylan as saying he was at work on "two new sounds." (This first post-accident interview also scotched one story that Dylan had cut his hair and was wearing three-button suits, while confirming another that he had grown a beard.) Since then, Dylan has signed another contract with Columbia—the threatened defection to MGM never came off—and a new album should be out soon. What it will contain is difficult to predict. So far, Dylan's iconoclasm has produced an art of word, sound, and image that appeals to a mass audience indifferent to literature. One hopes that he will also manage to keep from merging, Warhol-like, into his public surface. If the gap between literary culture and the uncertain terrain of pop gets any wider, we will continue to need artists like Dylan who can cope with both.

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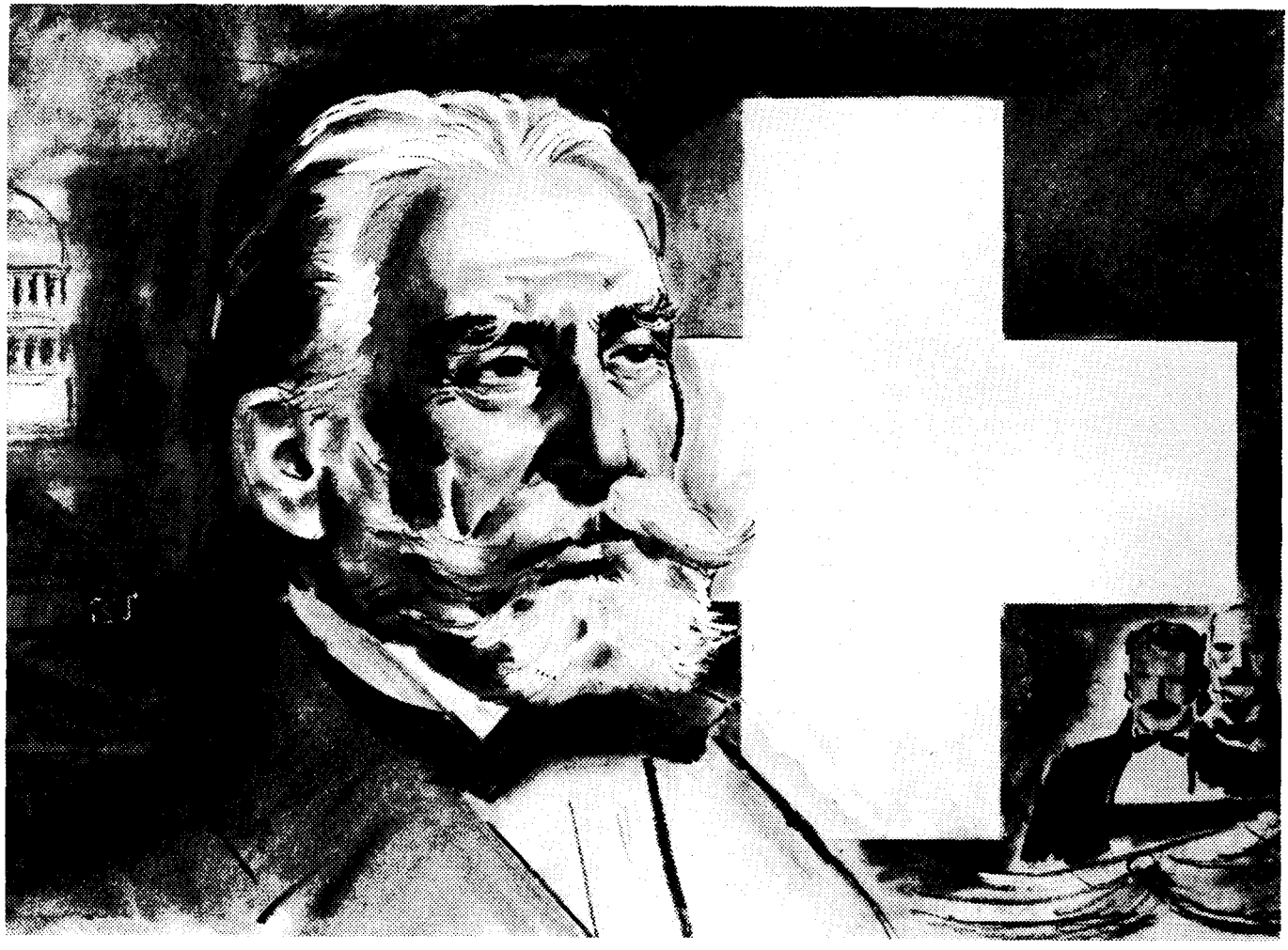

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A Founding Father of the American Red Cross

If the word "humanitarian" applied to any one person, that person could easily be Adolphus S. Solomons. Adolphus belonged to the select group of people who dedicate a lifetime working for the public good rather than for personal gain.

Born in 1826 to an English journalist, young Adolphus launched his philanthropic career soon after graduation from the University of the City of New York. He joined a group that helped raise money for an organization now known as Mt. Sinai Hospital.

Eventually, Adolphus settled in Washington, D.C. where he established the publishing firm of Philip and Solomons. It was here that his life of philanthropy and public service really flourished. Named to the Executive Committee of the Board of Delegates of American Israelites, Adolphus became the leading Jewish figure in Washington during the Civil War. He was a close friend of presidents, statesmen and generals. It was during this time that Morris Raphall, a strictly Orthodox Rabbi, became the first Rabbi to invoke the Deity for the House of Representatives . . . a testimony to Adolphus' influence in high places.

Adolphus' list of philanthropic efforts were as varied as they were long. He was Director of the Columbia Hospital in Washington and the Lying-In Asylum. He was President of the Provident Aid Society and the Associated Charities. He was Founder and President of the Night Lodging-House Association.

Perhaps the most significant of his humanitarian efforts were those devoted to the American Red Cross. He not only played an important part in founding the organization, but remained one of its leaders for seventeen years. It was in his home that the decision to form the organization was reached. He was one of the signers of the Articles of Incorporation, and its first Treasurer.

The feelings of the community towards Adolphus Solomons can perhaps be best summed up in this tribute given him by the great Jewish leader, Louis Marshall: "He believed in the sacred duty of personal service, and he performed that duty as a religious act, with cheerful heart, serious mind and willing hand. When he died, he was gathered to his fathers, a faithful custodian of the noble traditions of his people, and a saintly champion of the deathless mission of Judaism."

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Three American Novels

RISE AND SLAY!

John Thompson

ONCE ONLY in all the years of American Negro slavery did slaves organize a revolt. This was in 1831, in Southampton County, Virginia, a half-century after the Declaration of Independence, a third of a century before the Civil War. In the hundred years of false freedom following the Emancipation Proclamation, there was no important uprising by violence against the degradation imposed by America on its Negroes, until the summer of 1967. Then there occurred those bombings, burnings, and (to some uncertain extent) that gunfire directed against white Americans, acts said by some to have had the grand design of spreading so far as to force the recall of troops from Vietnam, and the disruption of American policy; but acts, anyway, upon which the governor of New Jersey conferred the title of "insurrection."

William Styron's new novel, *The Confessions of Nat Turner*,* is based on that uprising in Virginia in 1831, which also was called in its time an "insurrection." Through the "confessions" of the leader of that insurrection, the book undertakes "to recreate a man and his era," and to answer for that episode of violence the questions that alarmed the whole South in 1831, as they now alarm white Americans in 1967. Why did the Negroes revolt? How widespread was the conspiracy? Why did Nat Turner fail? But most of all, it seems, the question still is, as it was for the South and as it must ominously be for us, why was the violence so limited? Why only one revolt? (Why only that fitful and even doubtful sniping in our cities, why only that ghetto looting when everywhere the white suburbs lie crammed with plunder, guarded by screen doors and poodles? Why did not the Negroes really seize Detroit or Newark? What will happen next?) Anyone who held slaves as Southerners held them, anyone who holds Negroes in degradation as white Americans hold them today, must realize that his head rests on a tender neck. Yet who dares justify the chop of the axe? And finally, what is the human condition which seems to nourish out of its essence an eternity of tyranny and murder?

THESE questions and many more related to them are argued, brooded over, dreamed of, and acted out in *The Confessions of Nat Turner*. (Why in Virginia, where slave conditions were relatively good? Why —as of the end of this summer— only in the North? What is a Negro?) One of the questions that will surely be asked about the book itself is whether or not the uncanny timeliness of its appearance, after the author's twenty years of study and five years of writing, is really a service or a disservice. The book aspires to be more than a tract, yet today, a book about a Negro who leads other Negroes to murder men, women, and children solely because they are white cannot avoid becoming the matter of editorials, sermons, panels, and shouting matches. It is hard to imagine, though, how anyone will be able to go beyond the author's determination and courage in facing the almost impossible question, that of the justification of murder. This is the book's central and very considerable intellectual distinction. Yet while it was absolutely necessary that the matter be held to without flinching, if the book was to amount to more than another bloody romance, this intellectual and moral problem could not be the author's major concern. "Perhaps," he says modestly in his brief foreword, "the reader will wish to draw a moral from this narrative, but it has been my own intention. . . ." It has been his intention, surely, to produce a work of art. And certainly he has succeeded beyond the reasonable hopes of almost any writer. *The Confessions of Nat Turner* is a superb novel. Later I will try to point out some of its achievements as art—worth doing, perhaps, especially because it has the particular excellence of being such a good story that no reader decently susceptible to stories will be likely to pause, his first time through, over the means of his enthrallment. Certain other questions about "timeliness," however, do affect the book as a novel quite aside from the kind of public notice timeliness may attract, and these must be considered later.

The novel is based on a pamphlet of twenty pages called "The Confessions of Nat Turner," published in 1832 following Turner's hanging. Styron says he has rarely departed from the few known facts about Turner and the uprising—and never from his understanding of the history of slavery in America. What he has added to that is an immense understanding of the human spirit and a fine novelist's ability to make us see—to force us to see, to shove our noses into it—to smell, taste, and feel these imaginary events, as if they were real, to live through them, according to the way we have been taught by novels to believe we are living when we accept, as so many of us still do, the language of novels as life. Finally there will remain a caution to be stated about that.

TO RELATE in their order the chief events of Nat Turner's life is not at all to give an impression of the complex and rewarding structure of this book, which is like a treasure hunt where each clue is itself a

* Random House, 428 pp., $6.95.

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treasure, but it may give us some bearings for comment. Turner was born at the very beginning of the 19th century, into good fortune for a slave. His mother was cook in a white kitchen, and as a house slave Nat was spared the total brutality of field labor.

Here it is irresistible to give a brief account of Nat's grandmother, whose misfortune allowed his mother, as an orphan, and thus himself as her son, the luck of the house such as it was. His grandmother had been brought over as a girl in a slave ship from the Guinea Coast, was impregnated by some black man on that ship, and she died, insane in her captivity, shortly after reaching the United States of America and bearing here her gift to its posterity. Her cedar headstone, standing for a time until the Negro graveyard is burned over for a yam patch, is one of the ironies of the book that so enters the soul, like iron, that there is incitement to murder in the pious arrogance of every letter of it.

"TIG"
AET. 13
BORN AN
HEATHEN
DIED BAP-
TISED IN CHRIST
A.D. 1782
R.I.P.

But Nat's luck, furthermore, was that when he passed to his second owner, Samuel Turner, he became the property of an eccentric gentleman who by chance perceived that Nat might be the subject for an experiment in educating Negroes, not an illegal proceeding in Virginia as it was elsewhere, but universally assumed to be about as impossible and useful as teaching cows to fly. Thus, Nat became the pet "darky" of the household, "the smart little tar baby," and learned to read. He acquired a passion for the Bible. Later, his owner had him instructed in the trade of carpentry and promised him the opportunity of earning his freedom—a further experiment to show that Negroes could be successful as freedmen, since a free Negro without a viable trade was worse off than a slave, even in Virginia. To Nat, then, Mr. Turner is a figure of biblical grandeur, a Moses or an Elijah: "My regard for him is very close to the feeling one should bear only toward the Divinity." But the land of Virginia goes barren; Mr. Turner, in despair and with self-loathing, deceitfully sells off his slaves. Nat is sold into Egypt—except again he is lucky; he does not go with so many of the others into the murderous plantations of Georgia or Alabama, but stays in Virginia where, however harsh his bondage, he is not lost beyond all bearings of hope. But he has to hate Mr. Turner. At last, after one thing and another, following one adventure after another with sottish whites, sadistic whites, sympathetic whites, indifferent whites, he begins to form his great plan. He has learned to identify all whites with the enemies of the children of Israel, even though, or indeed because, they sometimes pet him. Fully immersed in his project, he still recalls Miss Nell Turner who taught him as a child, and he remembers to breathe "a silent word of gratitude to this gentle and motherly lady, from whose lips I first heard those great lines from Isaiah: *Therefore will I number you to the sword, and ye shall bow down to the slaughter, because when I called ye did not answer.*"

In those later years when he has turned thirty, Nat is again in a benevolent household, a skilled and trusted craftsman and a valuable property, "the smartest nigger in Southampton." He has become also a preacher of the Word to his people, and slowly gathers about him a small secret discipleship of slaves. He instructs them with stories of the captivity in Egypt, the triumph of Moses, and the wars of Joshua and David. Meanwhile, in the household of his benevolent master, Joseph Travis, Nat becomes ever more familiar with the other race. "Without knowing the white man at close hand . . . a Negro can only *pretend* to hate."

In still another household, where, rented out like a mule by his master, his talents as carpenter are highly prized, he is tantalized almost beyond endurance by the patronizing kindliness of Mrs. Whitehead and by the luscious, tender presence of her seventeen-year-old daughter, Margaret. In the Whitehead library he discovers a map of Virginia; and after a final, fast-induced vision, seeing in the heavens a black angel subdue a white angel, he completes his battle plan, based on that of Joshua. He will attack the farms, gathering recruits as he goes, seize the armory of the nearest town, and then retreat with his black army into the fastness of the Dismal Swamp, where, he believes, they can survive indefinitely, escaping in the end by sea to the North. By this time, his chosen few are prepared. When he tells them the time has come to reveal his purpose, they already know:

"Us gotta *kill* all dem white sonsabitches. Ain't dat what de Lawd done told you? Ain't dat right, Nat?"

The revolt begins well but soon fails. Joseph Travis and his family are slain, and the Whiteheads. Nat himself kills young Margaret. Altogether, sixty white people die. But only a fraction of the local Negroes join the rebels, many of the others aid the whites. After only two days the band is all dead or dispersed, and the whites undertake a riot of reprisal in which one-hundred and thirty innocent Negroes are cut down by mobs. Nat is captured, tried, and hanged. The first and last slave uprising in America has come to nothing.

As THE FEW quotations I have given will have indicated, the story is told as if by Nat Turner himself. When the book opens, he is jailed, in leg irons and chains, awaiting trial and certain execution. After a few introductory pages from the deposition of the Southampton County court, the confessions begin, with a daring and totally assured flight of language into the heart and soul of Nat Turner.

Nat recounts the central dream or vision of his life. He imagines he is floating in some sort of small boat down an estuary toward the sea—which he has never seen—and toward a cape where stands a strange white marble building, a temple, sarcophagus, or monument, "endowed with a profound mystery." This vision—we may suppose it to be both death and birth,

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seen in this same symbolic white body—brings him always an "emotion of tranquil and abiding mystery." The book will close as it begins with this half-dream, half-vision. The passage has an extraordinary effect, no matter how we rationalize it with our modern interpretations of dreams. It creates at once sympathy, respect, and trust for our imaginary narrator. At the center of his soul is a dream of peace, beneath all the violence, hatred, and despair; and he conveys this to us in language of surpassing distinction. The dream itself may be beyond language, but it is language that brings it to us. And that the words are those of a Negro slave is made totally credible. The tone, so unfaltering and impeccable throughout the book, is slightly archaic, formal, and touched everywhere with the majesty of the King James Bible. Yet the author has claimed for himself a further daring, beyond his claims of this eloquence for a Negro slave. Nat Turner speaks not only as some genius of the 1830's might have spoken, but he insinuates himself across the years into our minds by his mastery—and strange as it may seem this too is totally successful—of the more exquisite strategies of 20th-century literary language. He says, and the reader believes Nat Turner is saying, "—as if by one single glimpse of this scene I might comprehend all the earth's ancient, oceanic, preposterous splendor." Here, *preposterous* is one of our modern sophistications. Or, he says, someone is "chewing upon the *gorgeous* syllables as if upon air. . . ." Or, "an ancient Elijah exploding in bearded triumph at the transfiguration of Christ." Or again, this time with the utter conviction of unrhetorical simplicity: "my tall, beautiful mother."

Very rarely does the style slip at all, perhaps it does not ever. I may misunderstand when I wish that Nat had not been made to echo the famous line of Marlowe in describing his first great vision, ". . . the blood ran in streams against the churning firmament." But all in all, the grand style is an achievement as necessary as the intellectual courage of the book, and the primary act of Styron's faith in his hero is this benediction of his finest language. It is a language somewhat of the kind that Styron —if we are to speak of the author now as we do in reviewing books, as enlisted in some competition for Parnassus—a language that Styron has used before but without quite the occasion for it. In *Set This House On Fire* he did seem to be chewing upon gorgeous syllables as if upon air. Here he has bitten off more than air, and the great words are authentic for Nat Turner. And those other obsessions of Styron's are necessary here, to speak again of the author, those obsessions with willful human debasement, with murder, depravity, corruption of the beautifully innocent, those things that seemed only obsessions in him once. But here they come true.

The other range of language available to contemporary authors also serves Styron well, and again doubly impresses upon us that people who lived in 1831 were human beings like us, and that we are human beings like them. How instantly and shockingly the scene leaps into focus when we overhear a Negro slave of 1831, in Virginia, saying, "*Shee-it*, man."

"After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces. I beheld then because of the voice of the great words: I beheld even until the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame."

"Dey was a free nigger woman name Laurie, wife to old John Bright live up Cloud School way, you know? Well, dey took dat woman an' leant her up 'longside a fence and druv a three-foot spike right up her ole pussy like dey was layin' out a barbecue. Oh me, Nat, de tales I heerd tell dese months and days! Dey was two white mens I heerd about, come up from Carolina, has actual got dem a real bunch of black nigger heads all nailed to a pole and was out to git dem some mo' till de troops grabbed holt 'em an' run 'em back to Carolina—" "Hush."

"Nigger life ain't worth pig shit." "White fuckah." So far as I know, nobody else has ever seriously made this simple and frightening exchange of the smallest debased currency of talk to establish a sure transaction between our times and those other days.

Earlier, I remarked how the author, through Nat's voice, causes us to see, taste, and smell the events of the story. This amounts to more than "description." To Nat Turner, as to Huckleberry Finn (and to Macbeth) in justified precedent, the world of nature, the weather, the call of beast and bird, are more than background. They are signs charged with anima, they are portents, warnings, omens. "The light paled, the stark shadows of the barren wintry trees grew hazy and dull, lost definition; far off in the woods a flock of ragamuffin sparrows, late winter visitors, ceased their cheeping, became still in the false dusk." Or, "I sat still on the board, watching the dawn light grow and fill the cell like a cup, stealthily, blossoming with the color of pearl. Far off in the distance now I heard a rooster crow, a faint call like a remote hurrah, echoing, fading into silence. Then another rooster crowed, nearer now. For a long while I sat there, listening and waiting. Save for Hark's breathing there was no sound at all for many minutes, until at last I heard a distant horn blow, mournful and familiar-sounding, a hollow soft diminishing cry in the fields beyond Jerusalem, rousing up the Negroes on some farm or other."

Along with this pervading sense of atmosphere, and the ever-present power of the language itself, the events as drama are prepared and delivered with all the old art of storytelling and with the instruction of modern psychology. Nat's revelations come to him in pairs, reinforcing one another, thickening and deepening the significance of the movements of his mind and of the persons in the action. His first drive to raise himself comes when as a child he instinctively steals a book he cannot read, and almost simultaneously witnesses the rape of his helplessly compliant mother by a drunken white overseer. He becomes aware, then, for the first time, of what he is. "I feel a sense of my weakness, my

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smallness, my defenselessness, my *niggerness,* invading me like a wind to the marrow of my bones."

When Nat first becomes inflamed almost to the point of madness by the girl Margaret Whitehead, he had just bloodied his own thumb, building shelves in her mother's library, whereupon she enters on a girlish prattling errand —in her pantalettes. His first self-baptism follows a boyish incident of homosexuality; his first vision proceeds from a masturbation fantasy. On the whole, this texture of combined incidents seems to be one more of the necessities of the book. At the end, in the last pages —and the suspense of the foregone conclusion keeps up until those very last pages—maybe it becomes at last schematic, but only finally, only, as I have suggested earlier, in a way that no novel could avoid.

Another kind of schematicism appears here and there, minor and rather embarrassing to notice, like some tiny blemishes of the skin that indicate no serious disorder but rather an overindulgence in something too rich for the digestion. These are the phrases that echo unnecessarily the note of historical irony: Negro slavery will last a thousand years, like the Third Reich; mention is made of people ill-fed, ill-clothed, ill-housed, like Roosevelt's one-third of a nation. These could well be spared, as perhaps for the sake of the whole book as a novel the "love story" could not.

THE DEEP connivance of the sexual instincts in all race relations has of course been remarked a million times. The white man's easy exploitation of Negro women, his paranoid fascination with the Negro penis, his projection of all his own forbidden sexual urges onto the Negro, particularly in the classic Southern occupation with sibling incest—these are all familiar matters today. (There is a tale of how William Faulkner once, at a Hollywood story conference, was asked to solve a crux the old Hays office had imposed. The movie needed to indicate clearly to the audience, without showing anything openly censorable, that a young man and a young woman had been having sexual relations. Faulkner: "Make them brother and sister.")

But sex today has become only another disappointment, rather like Emancipation or Desegregation or Free Dirty Speech. A Negro today can indeed, should he wish to obtain her consent, legally marry any white man's sister. This is less than the millennium. The general relaxation of sexual inhibitions in our society does not seem to have brought about, as once it was innocently supposed to do, any general relaxation of tyranny and murder, of violence. Human aggression is the problem of our time, not sex, and if the two are inextricably bound together in the roots of human biology and culture, if unkinking one of them will help straighten the other, then all we can say is that we have not yet begun. Dramatically, sex plays a central part in *The Confessions of Nat Turner,* and it does this in the traditional form of Western art, as love. Nat lusts for, loves most tenderly, and finally murders the beautiful Margaret Whitehead. Their scenes together provide some of the most astonishing evocations I have ever seen of how unspeakably desirable the young human female can be when our hearts have fixed upon some particular incarnation.

That Margaret all but openly, all but knowingly, loves Nat too is one of the things that most maddens him. Her love for him could never imagine crossing the hopeless gulf between them, except in death. "O Nat I hurt so. Please kill me Nat I hurt so." Well, today she could cross that gulf; if the gulf exists now it is as a recognized attraction. And at the climax of the novel, at its romantic, novelistic, *romance* climax, Nat crosses the gulf. Margaret, God, and his own sex are all, just before he is hanged, reconciled: "and the twain —black and white—are one. I faint slowly." God, who has been absent from Nat since the rebellion, leaving him in an emptiness beyond despair, speaks out at last. *Come, My son!* "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

In plain words, Nat Turner has just masturbated and this is his masturbation fantasy. What irony the author intends by this I do not know, nor how much he wants us to dwell on it. Nat, at least, is left with the fantasy as it is to him, as revelation, as the final moment of truth and reconciliation before death. So what can this be except the author's final kindness to Nat, a benevolent deception to ease the truly unbearable thoughts that had been his as he lay in his cell in chains, defeated and alone? It is those thoughts, though, that the reader must be left with, and not the *Liebestod.*

IN HIS CELL, as the book begins, Nat has been meditating on the flies that buzz there "in haphazard elastic loopings from wall to wall. . . . In many ways, I thought, a fly must be one of the most fortunate of God's creatures. Brainless born, brainlessly seeking its sustenance from anything wet and warm, it found its brainless mate, reproduced, and died brainless, unacquainted with misery or grief. But then I asked myself: How could I be sure? Who could say that flies were not instead God's supreme outcasts, buzzing eternally between heaven and oblivion in a pure agony of mindless twitching, forced by instinct to dine off sweat and slime and offal, their very brainlessness an everlasting torment? So that even if someone, well-meaning but mistaken, wished himself out of human misery and into a fly's estate, he would only find himself in a more monstrous hell than he had ever imagined—an existence in which there was no act of will, no choice, but a blind and automatic obedience to instinct which caused him to feast endlessly and gluttonously and revoltingly upon the guts of a rotting fox or a bucket of prisoner's slops. Surely, then, this would be the ultimate damnation: to exist in the world of a fly, eating thus, without will or choice and against all desire."

Nat reflects how he had once thought that the Negro's Christian faith, "his understanding of a kind of righteousness at the heart of suffering," could save him. *"And the afflicted people thou wilt save, for thou art my lamp, O Lord; and the Lord will lighten my darkness.* But now as I sat there amid the sunlight and the flickering shad-

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ows of falling leaves and the incessant murmur and buzz of the flies, I could no longer say that I felt this to be true. It seemed rather that my black shit-eating people were surely like flies, God's mindless outcasts, lacking even that will to destroy by their own hand their unending anguish. . . ."

Nigger life ain't worth pig shit, Nat Turner's friend Nelson once said: *mought make a nigger worth somethin' to hisself, tryin' to get free, even if he don't.*

It will take some utmost devotee of suffering to deny that proposition, as he reads this book, or to claim that there was any other choice for a Negro slave, to whom it had occurred that he might become a man, except slaughter. By the time Nat Turner's project begins to form, we cannot wait for the heads to roll. Then what of Newark and Detroit? What of burning stores and stealing television sets, or shooting a fireman in the back, supposing it was not the police or the National Guardsmen who did the shooting? Is this really required to make Negroes worth something? Easy for us to say it is not, but if what this book tells us is true, we are wrong. And wrong on other testimony too, if we are going to take art as testimony. William Faulkner was never able to imagine a Negro as more than a great sufferer—"they endured"—until he created his first real Negro man, Lucas Beauchamp, to whom precisely it first occurred, of all Faulkner's Negroes, that he might kill a white man.

Why is this so shocking? Why are we terrified by the notion that a Negro may kill a white person, when we are only saddened perhaps or indignant when whites kill Negroes with absolute impunity, assassinating Negro leaders in the most cowardly fashion possible, lying about it, and walking the streets afterward in secure self-congratulation; even, with absolute impunity, doing what no fanatic enemy of America could have imagined in his most inimical dreams, bombing a Sunday School full of children and killing them like dynamited fish?

The plain fact is that subject peoples are not supposed to retaliate against their subjection. Retaliation is shocking not for the real harm it does, but because it breaks a taboo. If we admit this right to retaliate, we have admitted our subjection of these people, and this our consciousness cannot afford. Americans have an absolute right to kill Vietnamese. If a Vietnamese kills an American, it is "terror": the illegal, immoral violation of a taboo, as dreadful as patricide. But like so many of the other taboos, like those sexual ones, this taboo seems to have lost its *mana,* at least for those upon whom we used to enforce it so freely. Even, there is an element of this primitive magic in the thrilled reaction to the great Israeli war. Jews are supposed to suffer, not to fight back, and above all they are not supposed to win. Or they *were* not; the thrill is that now they have won the outrageous right to win. Negroes seem still at some early stage of freedom, believing still that they are not supposed to win; while the whites remain at yet an earlier stage, in which Negroes may dare to sing hymns on white territory if they get permission.

IT IS A complicated and probably, as usual, a tragic day in history. We made a community here, agreeing to practice violence only minimally against one another, while reserving the right to practice it totally against others. Negroes, Puerto Ricans, they were not members of the community. Their nonviolence was imposed, not agreed upon. Now, uninstructed in the unconscious taboos that guard the rest of us from one another, they are free to commit random acts of aggression, pure aggression quite without other aim—or with the simple aim only, as in the instant switchblade reaction of the *macho* to some affront, of claiming a pitiful and disgusting runt's "manhood" by the murder of a stranger in the subway. To all this we are as blind as Nat Turner's confessor, the Court Commissioner who was honestly trying to understand the insurrection:

" 'For see here, Reverend, that's another item the people can't understand. If this was out-and-out tyranny, yes. If you was maltreated, beaten, ill-fed, ill-clothed, ill-housed—yes. If any of these things prevailed, yes. Even if you existed under the conditions presently extant in the British Isles or Ireland, where the average agricultural peasantry is on an economic level with a dog, or less—even if you existed under these conditions, the people could understand. Yes. But this ain't even Mississippi or Arkansas. This is *Virginia* in the year Anno Domini 1831 and you have labored under civilized and virtuous masters. And Joseph Travis, among others, you butcher in cold blood! That—' He passed his hand across his brow, a gesture of real lament. *'That* the people can't understand.' "

Nor can we understand. The final words are probably those of the tormented slave-owner who has sold Nat's friends and betrayed Nat, whom he loved.

"Surely mankind has yet to be born. *Surely* this is true! For only something blind and uncomprehending could exist in such a mean conjunction with its own flesh, its own kind. How else account for such faltering, clumsy, hateful cruelty? Even the possums and the skunks know better! Even the weasels and the meadow mice have a natural regard for their own blood and kin. . . ."

As for us, we seem doomed to remain oppressor and oppressed. Men of good will, we shall hope and pray that we can somehow alleviate all this through due process, through the natural decency of those of us who are enjoying our deserved prosperity in 1967, through the inspiration and leadership of the various millionaires we choose to guide our political destinies, and again, through the natural decency of those who may find themselves at some momentary if slightly fatal disadvantage in our company. This we may devoutly hope. But all we know for certain, considering now the truths of art rather than the blessings of politics or religion, is that from time to time men will rise and slay, if not the oppressor, then whosoever lies at hand in the oppressor's likeness.

JOHN THOMPSON, *who teaches English at the State University of New York at Stony Brook, will be reviewing fiction regularly in these columns.*

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WHEN HE IS BAD

Robert Alter

THE KINDEST thing one can say about Philip Roth's new novel is that it is a brave mistake. It is easy enough to imagine how exasperated a writer of serious ambition must feel to find himself trapped, as Roth has been, by his own initial success, securely tucked away by the public into a special pigeonhole of genre writing. *When She Was Good** is Roth's strenuously willed effort to break out of the narrow precincts of Jewish urban and suburban life into the great open country of indigenous American fiction. Or rather, what used to be indigenous American fiction, since at a point in time when at least our literature has achieved something like a viable cultural pluralism, Roth must go back a generation and more to an age when one might still speak of a mainstream in the American novel. His models, therefore, are writers like Sherwood Anderson, Sinclair Lewis, Theodore Dreiser; correspondingly, his choice of materials seems peculiarly self-conscious and his treatment of them unhappily anachronistic.

All the action of *When She Was Good* takes place in and around a small town with the uncomfortably symbolic name of Liberty Center, somewhere north of Chicago "in the middle of America." The characters are all simple, inexorably average townfolk, white Protestants (with the exception of one disreputable Catholic family) of Nordic or Anglo-Saxon stock. Flaxen hair, blue eyes, and snub noses tend to cluster at the visual center of the novel against a sketchy background of school corridors, football fields, lovers' lanes, back porches, coke machines, old jalopies, and whatever else is generally included in everyone's inventory of Hometown, U.S.A. Roth clearly knows about all this, as almost anyone who has grown up in America would, but there is little evidence in the novel that he knows it firsthand, with an eye for the nuances of character and social gesture among such people, in such a setting.

Everything that happens in the novel occurs on a plane of flat generality and in consequence virtually nothing is altogether credible. Much of this is the result of Roth's unfortunate narrative technique, to which I shall return, but it is also related to his habit of building on ready-made formulas instead of actually imagining his subject. The principal action takes place in the years after World War II, and while Roth elsewhere has convincingly recreated the feel of this period in a New Jersey Jewish neighborhood, his midwestern Protestants float in a colorless temporal ambiance that could be as easily attached to 1890 or 1920 as to 1950. Unable to conjure up the period in the minds and life-style of his characters, Roth falls back on the formulaic device of merely reciting recollected cultural passwords of the era—Milton Berle on television, Dick Haymes singing "It Might As Well Be Spring," Harry Truman's loud sportshirts worn outside the trousers. Apart from this forced invocation of temporal setting, the use of mechanical formulas is less obtrusive but more pervasive: it is, in fact, the armature around which plot and characterization are wound.

For in his attempt to create a bred-in-the-bone American heroine and a paradigmatic American marriage, Roth bases every major invention of character and event on the most familiar of formulas about the two sexes: American men, in their obsession with manliness, are supposed to be insecure about their masculinity, or not really men; and American women are supposed to be covertly domineering, subtly or brutally unmanning their men. Lucy Nelson, the protagonist of *When She Was Good*, has lived till the age of eighteen with a weak-willed, ne'er-do-well drunkard father whom she despises and a grandfather outwardly more successful but inwardly composed of the same pulpy stuff as his son-in-law. Predictably, Lucy becomes pregnant by a local boy who is every inch the weakling that her own father is, but she decides to have him make an honest woman out of her in the hope that through marriage she will be able to make a man out of him. The result, of course, is just the opposite of what she intends: husband Roy remains attached to his pathetic daydreams, his boyish snacks of Hydrox cookies, the distant tug of mama's apron-strings, while Lucy's attempts to confront him with his "responsibilities" make him aware only of the crack of the riding whip in her voice, the gleam of the castrating knife in her fierce eye. Such situations can only go from bad to hideous, and the animosity between Roy and Lucy finally bursts out in a forty-page domestic explosion, complete with obscenities hurled, blows struck across the face, and the meddling of obnoxious relatives. At the conclusion of all this, Lucy, half-insane with the sense of the injustices done her, flees into the night (as the saying goes), stopping finally at the lovers' lane where Roy first seduced her and where she now freezes to death in the snow, the perfect frigid American wife to the bitter, melodramatic end.

MANY HYPERSENSITIVE Jewish readers of *Goodbye, Columbus* accused Roth of Jewish self-hatred, though there is scarcely evidence for that in the stories themselves. What became clearer in *Letting Go* was that Roth suffered rather from a general deficiency in the sympathetic imagination of humanity. In his new novel, this deficiency of sympathy expresses itself in a kind of vendetta against human nature, at least in its characteristic American manifestations. Humanity is divided into those who are hateful and those who are merely contemptible, with most of the men falling into the latter category and a few rare creatures, like Roy's cigar-smoking, lecherous Uncle Julian, belonging to both groups at once. The title apparently refers elliptically to the end of the nursery rhyme: it is when Lucy is *good* that she is at her most horrid, and this could be applied almost equally well to every other character in the book. The novel reads, then, like *One Man's Family* written with the satirical moroseness of a Swift and none of Swift's genius.

This implacable attitude of Roth toward his personages may explain why he has written some

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remarkable short stories but has not yet proved that he can write a novel at all. In a short story, character can be exposed; in a novel it must be revealed. A novelist should be at least capable of seeing all around his characters, even to their attractive sides; to put this another way, he has to imagine at least the possibility of change and development in his personages. The characters of *When She Was Good,* on the other hand, are fixed in one anguished posture which we are made to see again and again—the men forever set in weak-kneed knavery around the central figure of the woman who, palpably victimized by them, unpityingly makes them her victims. Repeated for three hundred pages, this unvaried image of humanity is simply tedious.

The same word is inevitable in any description of the style and narrative technique. All the narration in the book adheres closely to the point of view of one character or another, with Lucy's naturally predominating. But since the consciousness of these characters, as Roth conceives them, is depressingly empty, containing little more than clichés and truisms, the whole novel is walled in with clichés without a chink of light from a world of intelligence and imaginative life that must exist somewhere on the outside. There is no analysis of motive, no realization of physical scene or atmosphere, not even the consolation of an occasional metaphor that strikes fire in the imagination. The entire book is made up of flat, unexpressive, unperceptive dialogue, summaries of the same, and summarizing accounts of action which paraphrase the language that would be used by the characters themselves to report it. *When She Was Good* is thus a textbook illustration of the imitative fallacy. One might forgive on the grounds of imitation an occasional sentence like, "Lucy herself had always thought of Joe as one big blah," but such sentences, in all their rhythmic deadness and all the stunted inadequacy of their adolescent vocabulary, comprise the whole texture of the novel's prose, from beginning to end. "No pity, no sympathy, no nothing," Roy is reported as saying to Lucy at one crucial juncture. "He was willing to let bygones be bygones, and to start in clean and fresh, and be a lot better off for the experience—if she was." Roth apparently does not give this to us in direct discourse because Roy's triteness in its original form would be just too embarrassing, but it is scarcely better in summary, and the prose throughout the novel never gets very much better than this.

A novelist, in one way or another, has to find a vocabulary to cope with the experience he presents, but Roth refuses to allow any adequacy of words either to his narrator or his characters. What Lucy wants is for people to be "innocent," "good," "just," "true," "strong," while those who threaten her are "wicked," "dirty," "cruel," "mean," "weak"—and that is the full extent of the novel's moral vocabulary. The book wallows in authorially contrived misery with neither the language nor the imaginative vigor to make sense of that misery. Toward the end, Berta, Lucy's grandmother, confesses that "she was sick and tired of disorder and tragedy." In style and substance, this marks the exact level of the novel's response to the human condition. *When She Was Good* conveys not—as Roth may have intended—the vision of an American Tragedy but rather a nagging, frustrated, irredeemably banal sense of being sick and tired of disorder and tragedy, which, however, stubbornly and invariably prevail.

ROBERT ALTER's *column, "In the Community," appears regularly in these pages. Mr. Alter's new book,* Fielding and the Nature of the Novel, *will be published next year by Harvard University Press.*

* * *

DEATH IN LIFE

Theodore Solotaroff

IT GETS harder and harder to see Susan Sontag through the smoke of opinion that smolders away now on all sides of her work. *Against Interpretation,* her collection of essays and reviews, produced much more heat, as they say, than light: almost every reviewer seemed compelled to stand up and be counted as to whether Miss Sontag was a cultural hero or villain, the lovely, brave Virgil of a genuine new underground/avant garde or the glib bootlegger of the latest wave of French modernism, East Village Pop, and other modes of the higher unseriousness. Like the celebrity that Miss Sontag appears to court with her left hand and disclaim with her right, her critical stance somehow managed to be both matter-of-fact and outrageous: a tone that gets under the skin in much the same way that those dust-jacket photographs of her—poised, striking, vaguely sinister—either seduce or repel. The result was that the ideas there were in *Against Interpretation* went mostly by the board. Now, along comes *Death Kit,** her second novel, to much the same apparent effect: so far, the book has either been wildly touted as the second coming of the modern novel or taken as firm evidence that Miss Sontag has little or no talent for fiction at all. Rather than let *Death Kit* drive us up the wall of such ultimate and exaggerated claims, it would be well to try to understand what the book is intended to do; indeed to interpret it: a procedure the book requires virtually every inch of the way.

Not only requires—despite Miss Sontag's theories about interpretation—but also deserves. I think that *Death Kit* is an unusually interesting novel in its own right as well as a clear advance over her first one, *The Benefactor.* For one thing, it's alive. *The Benefactor* had next to no vitality in it: it was all literature, and could have been taken for a parody of the post-expressionist novel of moral exhaustion and exquisite nerves were it not so exhausted and nervous itself. *Death Kit* is worth taking seriously because it is searching, charged, meant. Though its subject, like that of *The Benefactor,* is self-perception—or better, perceiving—its qualities are much more like those in Miss Sontag's better essays: those in which she succeeds in being both intelligent and audacious, instead of just one or the other. There is a great deal of creative bravura in *Death Kit,*

Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 311 pp., $5.75.

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Miss Sontag having struck a vein of invention which has produced an overflow of imaginative commentary on the interior life and also some genuine art. In the end, *Death Kit* doesn't dare or feel as much as it should as art and hence provides too much in the way of a talkative analysis of her hero's unconscious progress into death and too little *formal* demonstration, to use one of her favorite terms, of his slow extinction. But I'd much rather see Miss Sontag being carried away by her own invention than trudging drearily after the old avant-garde novel like a lady English professor looking for signals in Paris.

The "story" in *Death Kit* should be well enough known by this time for me not to have to rehearse it here. What may still need pointing up is Miss Sontag's device and design, at least as I read the novel, and I see no other way of reading it. Put briefly, the novel is precisely what the title says it is: the material that Dalton Harron, "Diddy," carries into death with him and assembles in death. He does not go to Buffalo: his "business trip" is the business of completing his death, following his successful suicide attempt at the beginning of the novel. He does not twice murder Incardona, the railway worker: he twice reenacts the murder of himself. He does not fall in love with and live with Hester: he invents and invests her with those qualities that express his desire, powerful but doomed, to be "reborn." In sum, the action takes place in the conscious and subconscious mind of a dead man: quite literally, in his after-life. This is the basic conception of the book and its major source of power.

Since the book has been badly misjudged because badly understood, it seems best to clear up its supposed obscurity, which has generally been taken as pretentious obscurantism. Obviously, Miss Sontag does not want to give the game away: the point of *Death Kit* being that Diddy's after-life is mainly a continuation, raised to a second power of purpose and perception, of the life he had lived. The tone, atmosphere, quality of his life-in-death are intended to resemble, though in a purer and more potent form, the death-in-life of this former decent, well-behaved Madison Avenue type WASP, the typical unsolid citizen of our day who, "not really alive," merely "inhabited" his life. That is to say, Diddy alive or Diddy dead merely makes a distinction, not a difference.

Faced with this point to make—as art, not as another banal statement of modern deadness—Miss Sontag perforce has to write her novel in a double-speaking way. Thus Diddy, still alive, is compared to a "failed amphibian." In the passages that open the novel, Miss Sontag describes his malaise as a contamination of the existence he has inhabited, a dissolution of the dense amniotic-like fluid that has been his element or "medium": "the soft interconnected tissuelike days are unstrung. The watery plenum is dehydrated, and what protrudes are jagged, inhuman units. The medium steadily evaporates; the teeming interlocked plenitude is drained of its sustenance. Dies."

Diddy's actual death is similarly and properly equivocal: "Diddy's guts dried out with humiliation; in three days he was discharged from the hospital minus twenty pounds of substance. . . . Knowing one has a life induces the temptation to give it up. One is dead. Therefore, one wants to die. Equally, one wants to be born." Diddy's after-life, though described with more or less naturalistic, everyday details and probabilities, is everywhere pervaded by an underlying feeling and vision of mortality. This comes to a climax, of course, in the final journey from the tunnel where he kills Incardona once and for all and enters the charnel house which contains his final "inventory of the world." But this merely makes explicit what has all along been variously and intricately suggested. Certain items are fairly obvious: his hotel room that is likened to a coffin, the company car to a hearse. Even a dilapidated train station quickly takes on the character and import of Diddy's situation:

> Diddy can't help marking the steady deterioration of the surfaces and furniture of this station. . . . Not only mere negligence is at work here, surely. A question of policy or principle. Only a matter of time before the wrecker's ball gets around to undoing this generous space. . . . But isn't there a good deal to be said for keeping a doomed place clean and in decent repair? Especially since nemesis is proving to be somewhat dilatory in paying its anticipated call.

Miss Sontag is not being merely arch, arbitrary, "literary" in her symbolic rendition of Diddy's journey between life and death. Though she has ended by putting on her literal-minded readers, her analysis of Diddy's progress into his new realm proceeds along fairly obvious Freudian lines, as well as the more arcane ones of the European phenomenologists, notably Bachelard. Whether one regards *Death Kit* as the content of Diddy's coma (there is some basis for this reading, though I don't think it adds up) or as a supernatural account of his after-life, the basic strategy of the book remains the same: the strategy of the unconscious in fantasies and dreams. Miss Sontag, indeed, comes very close to giving the game away at one point. Diddy has taken Hester away from the hospital to live with him and finds that his morbid guilt about murdering Incardona is gone. "He can't imagine ever, in Hester's company, being frightened of Incardona. . . . Because he no longer has to think only, or even mainly, of himself. Hester is here, interposed between Diddy and himself. Unable to see. Refusing to acknowledge the doubling of the self in dreams."

Just as the spatial phenomena of Diddy's "world" are usually informed and colored by his concerns and feelings, so is the divided self that has undone him bodied forth sharply in the figures of Incardona and Hester. Incardona, the surly, devious, lascivious worker that he twice murders is an image of the dreary workman in himself, of his baffled masculinity, his repressed animal nature. A more benign, because earlier, version of Diddy's instinctual life is the Wolf-boy, a fantasy of its fugitive and fearful privations that he had tried to exorcise in a college novel. Incardona arises from a fur-

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ther and more complete splitting off of the animal in Diddy, a more pernicious stage of repression that Miss Sontag at the outset likens to the "monstrous malfunctioning" of a generator in the basement of a house, one that has "gone amok" and sends forth a "torrent of refuse that climbs up into Diddy's life, . . . befouling Diddy's world and rendering it unusable. Uninhabitable." The brutal Incardona, smashing away at the barrier in the tunnel that has stalled the train, is Diddy pushing against the limits of his character and finally aiming his baffled fear, rage, and dismay back at himself. (Diddy reenacts his self-destruction as a self-defense, but when it comes to murder, it probably doesn't matter very much, emotionally speaking, which way the gun is pointing.)

If Incardona is Diddy's death-wish, Hester, of course, is the opposite. She is a much more complicated and unconventional figure than Incardona since she functions as an aspect of the theme of perception (which generally overloads the novel with extraneous detail), as well as Diddy's life force, feminine nature, and self-idealization. With all of these tags of significance clinging to her, the blind Hester moves less adeptly in the dark of Diddy's "world" than Miss Sontag says she does. As a character she is spectral—inadvertently so, I suspect, unlike, say, Incardona's wife—and as a psychological embodiment she is abstract, unlike, say, Hester's aunt, a subtly wrought version of the housekeeper who raised Diddy. But if Hester seems more her author's creature than Diddy's, and if she makes him seem more androgynous than Miss Sontag apparently intended him to be, still Hester serves well enough to carry out the elaborate and beautifully integrated pattern of Diddy's dreamwork, which, through his affair with her, both extends and reiterates the meaning of his life-in-death, death-in-life.

As WITH DREAMS, *Death Kit* is situated in the borderlands of consciousness where art and psychology cross. The intense formalism of the novel—each detail held in place by the pattern, each event shaped by the underlying logic of Diddy's intentions—is not only another demonstration of Miss Sontag's faith in the hegemony of form but also a heuristic method of mapping the interior life. One of the reasons that psychoanalysis is an art is that the unconscious is an artist—an endlessly cunning metaphysical poet which transmutes feelings into images, disparities into structures. Thus, to the extent that one is in touch with himself, life can be said to follow art, indeed to be art. At the same time, the realities of this life are deeply at odds with what we say and do as socialized beings: the poetry of our nights being a muted or screaming protest against the dissimulating "sensible" prose of our days. Or, as Miss Sontag puts it:

> When Joan (Diddy's wife) left, Diddy became wiser. . . . He hadn't been watching the wrong play for thirty years. But he'd been watching it without understanding the theory behind its staging—assuming naturalism of script and staging. In retrospect, a naive error. The script is intricate, and charged with obscure references; and the presentation concocted by the director, set designer, and lighting technicians is fanciful and stylized.

Though *Death Kit* is an autonomous work that generates its own terms, much of it is anticipated by Miss Sontag's recent essays on style as well as her studies of "formalism" in contemporary French thought and art, especially the cinema. Like the artists of the *nouvelle vague,* Miss Sontag holds, to use her phrase, "a dedicated agnosticism about reality itself," and *Death Kit* is a *demonstration,* as she would say, of the unreliability of our practical reason (a view that has been borne out, I'm afraid, by most of the reviews it has received). By the same token all the usual trappings of the realistic novel (the literary form most attuned to practical "reason" and hence Miss Sontag's aesthetic *bête noire*) are not so much ignored as subverted, tilted, turned inside out—both to bring out their inner lie and to facilitate what Miss Sontag would call the purely formal exploration of the structure of Diddy's "kit." Thus the conventional third-person point of view abruptly shifts to the first person plural, the author's commentary fades in and out of Diddy's meditations, and the overall tone is highly stylized to provide the mixture of intimacy and detachment, pathos and coldness, that Miss Sontag admires so much in the films of Resnais, Godard, and Bresson. Indeed, her description of the "formula" of the new French formalists—"coldness enclosing and subduing an immense pathos"—is a precise definition of the method and mood of *Death Kit.*

No doubt many readers by now will have found *Death Kit* to be a teasingly ambiguous puzzle, and perhaps among those who have solved it there will be some who agree with me that it is all too cold a pathos. I followed Diddy's progress with fascination but without ever quite believing in him: like Hester, he is too much an object of predication, too little a distinct and distinctive man, an experiencing subject of his own plight. As a result, my attention was often deflected from experiencing the book to interpreting it, unlike, say, Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilyitch,* a study of deadness which to feel is to understand and vice versa. Except for the two scenes in the tunnel and the trip through the house of the dead at the end, *Death Kit* lacks impact; its narrative writing is competent as well as intricate but Diddy's journey doesn't stay in the mind, stick to the bones. It is more figure than carpet, so that one will hang it on the wall to admire rather than put it on the floor to live with. It is miles beyond the longueurs and artificiality of *The Benefactor,* yet still an essentially analytic, technique-ridden work of art. But a work of art nonetheless: bold, complex, coherent in its own purpose, resolutely faithful to its own vision of "life."

THEODORE SOLOTAROFF, *a former associate editor of* COMMENTARY, *is now editor of the literary journal,* New American Review.

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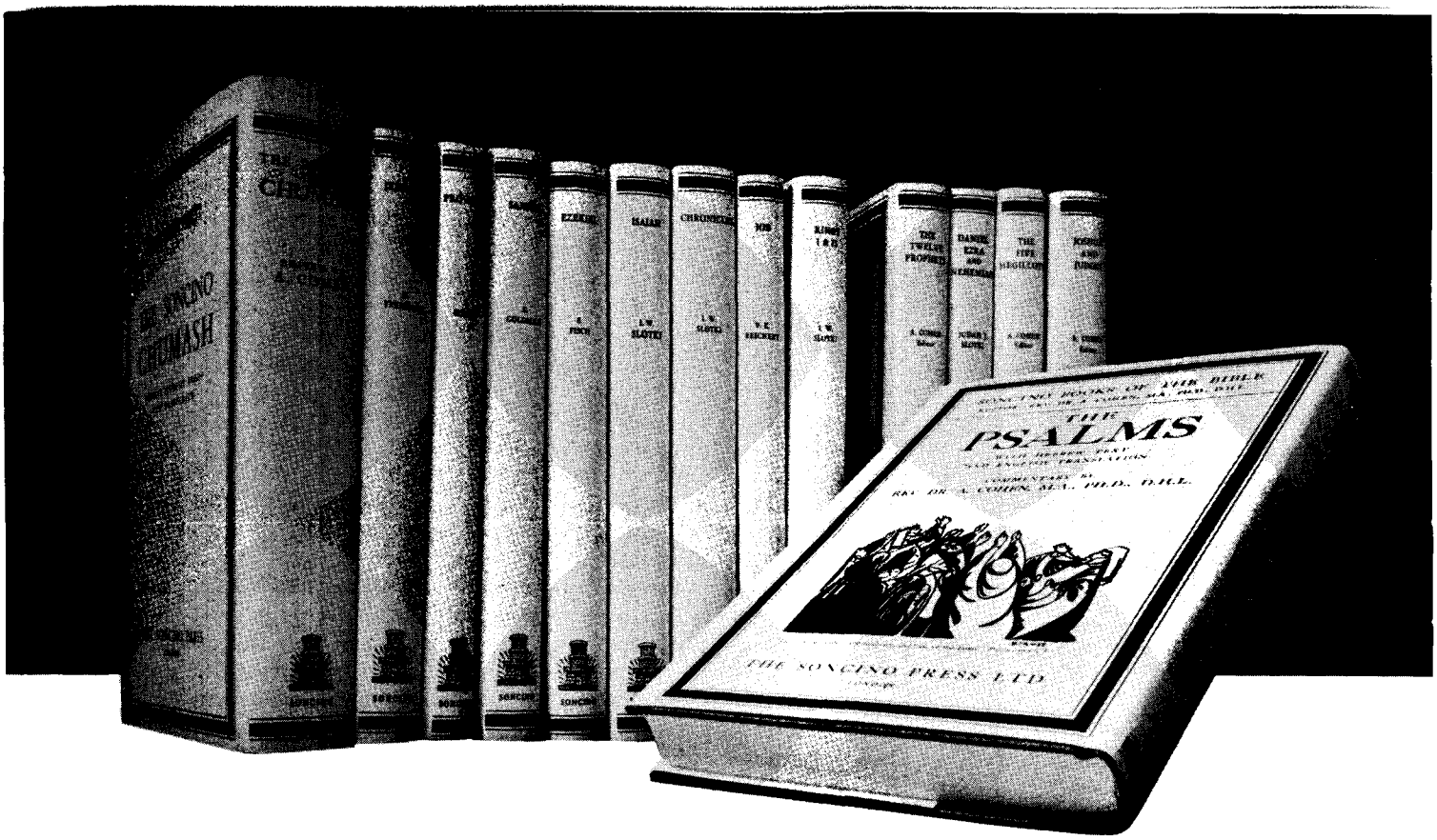

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CHILDREN OF CRISIS: A STUDY OF FEAR. By ROBERT COLES. *Atlantic-Little, Brown. 401 pp. $8.50.*

Reviewed by MARY ELLMANN

SOME OF THESE "children" are little, the rest look grown-up. The "crisis" in which they are involved is the civil-rights movement. As the success of this movement is steadily put off, the movement itself becomes a state of being, a cruel condition of life which, like other conditions of life, air pollution or soil erosion, can be studied at leisure. Throughout the 60's, Dr. Robert Coles has observed and interviewed people living in the South and obliged by their sheer presence, whatever their point of view, to be a part of the civil-rights movement. His purpose has been a psychiatric survey of their reactions to its "stress." His subjects have been five Negro and white children who took part in the token desegregation of public schools in the South, two of their teachers, seven young people (Northern and Southern, Negro and white) who have worked on civil-rights projects, and eight Southern adults (one a Negro) who have variously supported, ignored, or opposed the movement.

Since these people speak for themselves in the book, through long tape-recorded conversations with Dr. Coles, they make an immediate and natural impression which is, to some extent, independent of their being quasi-characters in a formal history. And regrettably, with the exception of the Negro children, they prove to be dull people. They lack even the eccentric interest of true psychiatric patients: none of them shows psychopathological symptoms, unless one might think (listening to the passionate segregationists) that life itself is an undiagnosed disorder. But then many of these people, unlike the segregationists, have behaved admirably. I can only conclude, quite conventionally, that there is no reliable correlation between virtue and reading pleasure. Consider the civil-rights workers whom Dr. Coles calls "The Protesters." Excellent young people who have acted bravely and endured pitiable anxieties. And yet the longer they talk here, the less articulate they seem. They speak of deliberately avoiding "introspection" even as they reveal a consumptive (one would have thought paralytic) subjectivity. At the same time, the contents of their self-scrutiny are utterly familiar. There is perhaps nothing now in the United States that we all know more intimately than the secret thoughts of young, earnest, and troubled autodidacts.

Similarly, the white Southern adults seem to be exactly the people one had vaguely supposed them to be. Again, some are admirable, while others in this group are despicable. But the chief impression made by all eight of them is one of intellectual confinement. Their minds swelter inside a tiny space formed by the angles of the South, the Family, and Color, of which the last is conspicuously obtuse. Every white Southerner, it seems, embraces a mystique of region, everyone remembers, in unleavened detail, just what Daddy was like; everyone has his own lecture prepared on the moral, mental, and psychological character of the "nigra" or the "nigger." The first of these terms is considered by some Southerners to be too respectful. In the course of these confidences, one comes to loathe them both.

But the young Negroes at least, confined by others, seem less self-confined. They refer from time to time to physical objects (grits, grass, tears) which exist, and are seen, beyond race or role. The small children have the sudden artless perception of all small children. In a puzzling situation, they very sensibly tend to ask questions rather than to answer them. The young men, too, have somehow es-

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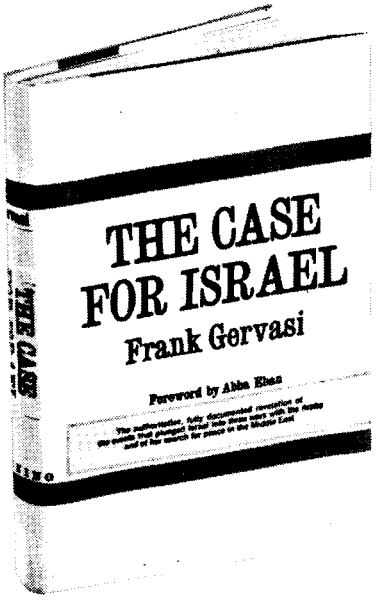

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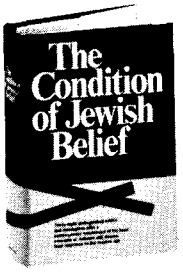

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caped the impression which their white co-workers give of having been born and bred in a bull session. Perhaps because they have not recently chosen hardship, but have known it all their lives, their speech (even in this "corrected" version) is not oiled or automatic. If a jargon of unrelieved pain has been devised, it has not yet been learned by all Southern Negroes.

Dr. Coles saw these people frequently, and it is clear that he treated them with tact, sympathy, and patience. I especially honor his regularly joining six-year-old Ruby to play with her doll's house and to "drink tea." Such interest, even in the segregationists, must have given pleasure and comfort. Professional research of this kind is unusual, in that it benefits others long before its results have been published. And these results, in turn, are stated honestly. There is no conscious effort to disguise the complexity of the issue, and no pretense that psychiatric examination is the sufficient or even the most nearly sufficient method of its solution. On the contrary, what emerges from the book is the inadequacy of the psychiatric mode.

IT IS NOT merely that most of the subjects could never, by themselves, have found or paid for psychiatric care. They didn't *need* it. The particular degree of racial injustice upon which the United States has settled evidently does not produce definable neuroses. In fact, the distress which is caused by this degree of injustice constitutes a wry form of "mental health." In the "crisis" or "extreme situation," as Bruno Bettelheim calls it, it is the cessation of distress which is the true illness. For persons like these Negroes, then, who are capable of asserting themselves within their trouble, psychiatry is impractical. If a person is depressed by hunger, he needs food. And if he is infuriated by inequality, he needs to be equal. The habitual effort of psychiatric therapy to adjust the first-class citizen to his first-class life, is insulting to the person who prefers rage and violence to any further adjustment to segregation.

Moreover, Dr. Coles suggests that psychiatry is largely irrelevant to the impersonal or ultimate understanding of the civil-rights movement. Extreme alienation from established social patterns is called madness, and psychiatry attempts to restore its victims to what we consider rational degrees of alienation. But since nothing established by even a sane society can be as good as (and much is far worse than) something else which might conceivably be established in the future, there falls between people and psychiatry the inexplicable barrier of idealism. Consequently, Dr. Coles seems forced to a pre-psychiatric conclusion: the comprehension of the civil-rights movement, and of all behavior within it, may finally depend upon ethical study. For a sick mind, the psychiatric hope is that an understanding of past causes will explain present effects. But in the civil-rights movement, Dr. Coles found no such certain interrelationship. Similar upbringings have produced dissimilar points of view, just as many divergent personalities have found mutual purposes. The civil-rights movement appears to have an antique metaphysical obscurity about it: a crisis arises and in response to it, for no clear or predictable reason, some unexceptional people behave well and other unexceptional people behave badly.

One wonders, finally, if psychiatry can furnish even the vocabulary in which to express its own limitations. Dr. Coles prefers to avoid what he calls his "professional dialect," and when he does resort to it, he resorts to quotation marks as well, to indicate embarrassment or apology. He also avoids what has come to seem the facility of Freudian correspondences. Only once, a fat white mob-woman's eating of chocolate candy is related to her heckling of a "chocolate-skinned" first-grader. And this one lapse is excused by the genuine small discovery that the same Negro child thinks that her skin color, like a crayon, ought to furnish brown for a tree trunk in a picture. She wets her finger and then rubs it on her drawing paper.

Still, in the discussion of such uncharted lives, a professional or clinical terminology might have had the advantage of precision. In

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its absence here, a certain blandness of diction, an ethical simplism, become apparent. The subtitle of the book, "A Study of Courage and Fear," is its first indication. These qualities have received so much subtle philosophical reexamination in the 20th century that it seems impossible now to use them easily. But Dr. Coles is particularly dependent upon such paired abstractions: "promise and power," "risks and burdens," "fears and tensions," "guilt and confusion," "hate and suspicion," "idealism and fanaticism." This is not, I think, a taste for vulgar rhetoric. It seems rather the habit of diagnosis, the shorthand of neurotic symptoms rather than the fought-for wording of full experience. As Dr. Coles himself remarks, "The vicissitudes of the strong and willful are not adequately described by a language that hopes to document the pains of the ill."

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THE TOSCANINI MUSICIANS KNEW. By B. H. HAGGIN. *Horizon. 245 pp. $7.50.*

Reviewed by SEYMOUR RUDIN

A NEW BOOK by B. H. Haggin has always been something for which, as a serious listener to music and reader of music criticism, I have felt grateful. The appearance of two new Haggin books in the space of a few months has proved a cause not only for renewed gratitude but for embarrassment. It is not the riches in the books that constitute the embarrassment; they are welcome riches, the unequaled riches of musical taste and perception, of stylistic clarity and grace that readers of his previous books have known for thirty years, and those of his periodical criticism for over forty. The embarrassment is what a reviewer must feel before really formidable achievements, before the task of suggesting—particularly to those who may still not know Haggin, or not know him well—what makes these books so exhilarating, so valuable, so extraordinary.

One should admit right off that one of these books is not wholly, or even substantially, new. *The New Listener's Companion and Record Guide* has some textual additions and alterations and includes a wholly revised discography, up to date as of March 1967 and incorporating a newly conceived section on "The Great Recorded Performances of the Past." But the bulk of the book is essentially unchanged from its first edition (1956) and its second (1959). It consists of a series of chapters in which Haggin first generalizes about the experience of the listener and the function of the critic, proceeds to analyses of basic musical forms and procedures and individual treatments of the major 18th- and 19th-century composers, continues with briefer comments on composers of earlier periods and of the 20th century, and concludes with observations on musical performances, on jazz, and on the writings of other music critics.

What also remains unchanged or sometimes becomes enhanced, I find, is the impact of these chapters as one rereads them—one's delight in the clarity, the economy, the confidence with which Haggin takes the reader-listener, with musical illustrations, through fugal construction, for example, or through the exquisite details of a Mozart concerto movement, a Berlioz song, a Debussy orchestral piece, or through the critical mind of a Shaw reacting to music and its performance in the London of 1889. And I feel again, as with the previous editions, that the jacket blurb is accurate, for once, in claiming that "this is a book for readers of all degrees of musical experience." The novice needs, in order to follow and use Haggin's point-to-point analyses of particular works and his seasoned evaluations, no more than a serious interest in learning to listen to music more attentively, acutely, rewardingly. On the other hand, the seasoned listener can return many times, I have discovered, to chapter after chapter with new response to certain perceptions, new insight into certain formulations, new respect for Haggin's alertness and good sense as a guide through the listening experience.

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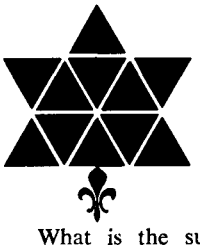

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must again, of course, take the temperamental limitations, the crotchets, the occasional slips. The discography does not list works by Bartók or Schönberg or Webern, among other important composers; Haggin finds most of the music of these masters ugly and incomprehensible, as he finds most of the more recent music derived from them. Moreover, he finds a good deal of Brahms and Wagner tedious, pretentious, and impossible to listen to; the reader must therefore go without guidance as to the best performances of Brahms's concerti and chamber works, or of *The Ring* and *Parsifal*. And if Otis Ferguson's description of a Beiderbecke performance as being "as fresh and glistening as creation itself" is not quoted in as wearyingly numerous contexts as it was in earlier editions, the current volume has other instances of Haggin's tendency to overuse a borrowed formulation that he admires. The volume also, handsome in format though it is, has more than its fair share of errors—a few factual inaccuracies and failures to bring references up to date (particularly in the chapter on criticism), for which Haggin is responsible, and a good many typographical slips, for which gremlins are.

But it is renewed pleasure, astonishment, and gratitude, in sum, that *The New Listener's Companion* inspires. Those of us who may want to know about Bartók, Schönberg, or Webern (or, for that matter, about Puccini and Ravel, whose work Haggin dismisses as trash) will have to go elsewhere. Those who want advice on recordings of the Brahms Violin Concerto or *Die Walküre* (or all but one of the Bach Cantatas, since Haggin also rejects some generally revered 18th-century music) will not get it here. But nowhere else, as far as I know, will one get such clear, direct, economical guidance through some of the richest musical experiences—works of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Berlioz, and others. No other compilation offers such careful, sharpwitted, confidence-inspiring comments on available—and sometimes on now unavailable but treasurable—recorded performances. (I have been reading and using Haggin's record reviews since long before the first edition of this book, since the 30's in fact, and I have not yet gone wrong on a recommendation of his.) There is no other music criticism today of such solidity, such honesty, such morality—morality in the sense in which it was demonstrated in the work of his favorite conductor, as he once observed: "[Toscanini's] extraordinary powers operate . . . with an economy that is a form of honesty in relation to the situation and material; and in this way the performance is . . . a moral experience which I find intensely moving." Haggin's writing is, for me, such an experience.

ONE MAY go on to say that the moral experience of Toscanini's music-making is the theme of Haggin's other new book, *The Toscanini Musicians Knew*. And one feels it necessary to add at once that much of the book is, in a sense, not by Haggin. It consists of statements by seventeen musicians who worked with Toscanini, statements derived from interviews which Haggin edited into monologue form and to which he appended extensive notes. What he says about the statement by the cellist Alan Shulman may be applied as well to all the others: "I haven't used Shulman's every word, but the words I give are his."

The book is remarkable in a number of ways. It is the first available collection of insiders' comments on the legendary maestro, comments by gifted fellow musicians who shared his professional dedication to music, assisted him in its performance, found and treasured in him—in different ways and to different degrees—a skill, a devotion, a burning selflessness in his service to their common task that set him apart from all other interpreters. The best way to try to learn now why Toscanini became a legend, to understand why his interpretations of Haydn, Beethoven, Wagner, Verdi, Debussy, of old and new music, consequential and inconsequential music, seemed —after those of other conductors— to offer again and again the effect of revelation is, of course, to listen to such of his recordings as remain available. (And Haggin has offered guidance for such listening in his comments on Toscanini's record-

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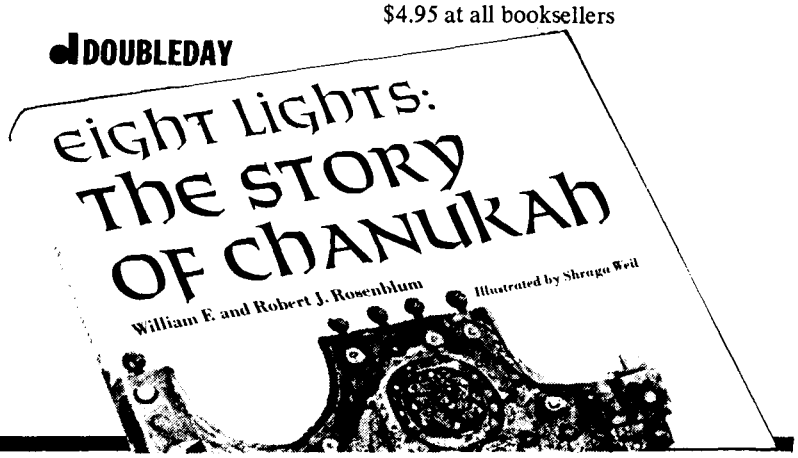

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ings, including angrily detailed comments on how some of them were marred by irresponsible and ignorant studio officials, in both the "Great Recorded Performances of the Past" chapter of *The New Listener's Companion* and his earlier [1959] book, *Conversations with Toscanini.)* But it is extremely valuable to have for the first time, as an adjunct to such listening, a carefully edited series of portraits —of the man, inevitably, as well as of the conductor—by fellow musicians. And it is the "moral experience" that Toscanini offered, his giving of himself wholly to the service of the music with his involving passion, his infinitely sensitive ear, his unrivaled feeling for tempo and rhythm and accent, his divination—within certain limitations of taste and sympathy—of the communicative purpose of composers from Vivaldi to Gershwin, from Berlioz to Sousa, to which each of these statements impressively attests.

The musicians who speak in the book vary tremendously, of course, in temperament, in experience, in their particular involvements with Toscanini, and in the particular details of his operation that they had the chance to observe. They include members of his NBC Symphony, singers in his opera performances, a pianist who played a concerto with him, a conductor who assisted him in the preparation of choral works. And one of Haggin's achievements, in the questioning that elicited the statements (originally made, for the most part, on tape) and in the subsequent editing, is that each musician is allowed to speak with his own voice, to convey the individualized response that makes each statement a freshly interesting experience.

But the total effect of these individual statements is cumulative and consistent. The violinist Felix Galimir remembers that "you were proud of the way you played when you played with him, because you could not do anything but give your best. . . . You had only to look at his face: he was so inspired that he had to inspire *you*. . . . And the honesty! He was so honest—musically honest, and with himself honest." The violist Nicolas Moldavan reports that "you were affected by

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his intensity. There were times, in the playing, when everybody felt like giving, like going with him. . . . This happened many times, and the only explanation was just magnetism, electricity. . . . There was his musicianship, with a tremendous drive and force. . . . He didn't compromise in anything: in dealing with music he was a man of one hundred percent soul, mind, and integrity." The tenor Jan Peerce notes that "it's been said that musicians played or sang over their heads for him; but I don't think he made me do the impossible. . . . What I would say is that he got as much out of you as he could, and as much as you *should have given*. . . . People ask, was he acting, or was he sincere; and my answer is, he was *he*. . . . When we did *Bohème*, tears were coming down his face, and it wasn't put on: nobody saw it, just us." And the veteran bassoonist Hugo Burghauser, who played under Toscanini with the Vienna Philharmonic in the 30's, recalls that "the orchestra, which had been day in, day out with Strauss, Weingartner, Bruno Walter, by then also Klemperer . . .—the orchestra, with Toscanini, realized this was the climax of every musician's experience. . . . He was such a moralist, and he made such a moral appeal, that you were overwhelmed by the mere morality. Not intonation, not dynamics, not rhythm—which were of course all necessary; but like a Moses with the Ten Commandments he stood there and said: 'This is the law, not of me: it is *Beethoven* who demands it!' So we found out what Beethoven is."

There are, of course, some recollections of the Maestro's notorious tantrums, his sometimes unpredictable explosions, his occasional cruelties. Some of the musicians even express doubts about aspects of his conducting technique. And Haggin's notes document the harm he sometimes did to his own musical cause by uncritical acceptance of the advice of certain friends and colleagues—notably the NBC executive Samuel Chotzinoff, who emerges as a sinister figure, conspiring against Toscanini's artistic purposes for the sake of NBC's commercial ones. But it is love, in the end, that is the ruling exper-

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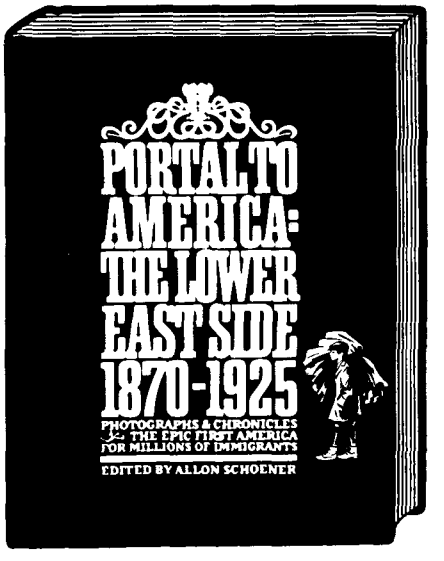
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ience of this book—Toscanini's love of music, and his fellow musicians' —and Haggin's—love of him, of the greatness of spirit that made possible the unique revelations of which his performances consisted. *The Toscanini Musicians Knew* constitutes an impressive centenary tribute to him, and it is pleasant to be able to add that the volume is as handsomely printed as *The New Listener's Companion*, is less afflicted with gremlins' errors, and is enhanced by some of Robert Hupka's extraordinarily beautiful photographs of its subject in the act of making music.

QUESTIONS OF COMPLICITY

THREE POPES AND THE JEWS. By PINCHAS E. LAPIDE. *Hawthorn. 386 pp. $6.95.*

Reviewed by GUENTER LEWY

UNTIL FURTHER archival sources become available, it would seem that everything possible has been said about the silence of Pius XII in the face of the Nazis' murder of six million Jews. The news value of this recent addition to the literature, therefore, is probably due less to its content than to its authorship. Pinchas Lapide is an Orthodox Israeli Jew, a Canadian-born journalist and former diplomatic official of the Israeli government, who sets out to refute the charges against the late Pope contained in Rolf Hochhuth's *The Deputy* as well as in recent works by other writers. Mr. Lapide is described as the author of eight previous books as well as many articles, and he is said to have been personally acquainted with all three of the popes involved in his study—Pius XI, Pius XII, and John XXIII.

The first three chapters of his book survey the sordid history of Jewish-Christian relations from ancient to modern times. From "perfidious Jews" to forcible baptism, from "God-damned Jews" to ghettos, and from "Christ-killers" to the massacre of thousands during the Crusades, there led, according to the author, "a chain of logical events, each of which evolved from its heinous predecessor. . . . Origen, Tertullian, Chrysostom, Augustine, and Aquinas would probably have recoiled from the gas chambers, but their anti-Jewish writings willy-nilly became milestones on the scarlet road which Christian hatred has paved from Golgotha to Auschwitz." Lapide estimates that the number of Jews killed by Christian hands prior to 1925 exceeds seven million souls. Those still unconvinced by the link between Christian anti-Judaism and Hitler's Final Solution of the Jewish question are directed by the author to the testimony of a Protestant pastor tried by a German court in 1958. When this former member of the SS *Einsatzkommando* was asked by the judges why he had acquiesced in atrocities against the Jews, he replied that to his mind "these acts were the fulfillment of the self-condemnation which the Jews had brought upon themselves before the tribunal of Pontius Pilate."

All this, of course, covers familiar ground, as does the discussion of the records of Popes Pius XI and John XXIII. Moreover, these parts of the book are marred by the careless handling of certain matters of detail. Thus the murder of Dr. Erich Klausener, head of Catholic Action in Berlin, took place during Hitler's Blood Purge of June 30, 1934 and not in September 1933, as the author maintains. Then, too, Mr. Lapide might have told us from where he derives the perfectly preposterous story that Archbishop Bertram, senior of the German episcopate, sought to join the Nazi party in 1932. But these and similar slips can perhaps be written off as minor faults that do not touch the main argument. It is when the author discusses the pontificate of Pius XII, to which the bulk of the book is devoted, that his tendency to weave together fact and fiction becomes predominant. Since limitations of space rule out a point-by-point analysis, I must confine myself to a brief discussion of certain basic issues.

MR. LAPIDE's image of the Roman Catholic Church during the reign of Pius XII bears some resemblance to the general picture of Catholicism popularized in this

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country by Paul Blanshard, a picture of the Church as a monolith directed strictly from the center in Rome and run with an iron hand by the pope. Such an image is an indispensable part of Mr. Lapide's effort to demonstrate that the Catholic priests and laymen who acted to rescue Jews in numerous places, as well as the local bishops who occasionally protested against Nazi atrocities, were all acting on papal orders and directions. It is, of course, undeniable—and admitted even by Hochhuth—that thousands of European Jews owe their lives to the courageous help of individual Catholics who hid them or otherwise helped them in their hour of supreme distress. This was especially true of Western Europe, where solidarity with the Jews was often regarded as a sign of patriotism and resistance to the Germans. It is equally well established that the episcopate of the Allied countries, as well as certain French, Belgian, Dutch, Hungarian, and Slovakian bishops, protested against the deportation and slaughter of the Jews. But if we are to accept Mr. Lapide's assertion that everything important that took place in the Catholic Church during World War II was the result of the Pope's commands, or at least his approval, must we then not also assume Pius's responsibility for the sad record of the German Catholics who cooperated with the Nazis? Is it reasonable to think that what Lapide calls "the rigid discipline for which Pius XII was famous" accounts for the pro-Jewish utterances and actions of some bishops but not for the anti-Semitic sentiments of others?

Seeking to meet the criticism directed against Pius XII, the Vatican recently began the publication of certain selected materials in a series entitled "Acts and Documents of the Holy See concerning the Second World War." The impression created by these documents—and those which are to be found in German diocesan archives—does not jibe at all with the picture of a monolith painted by Lapide. The Pope's communications to the local Church dignitaries do not consist of orders; they are politely worded letters of one who considers himself *primus*

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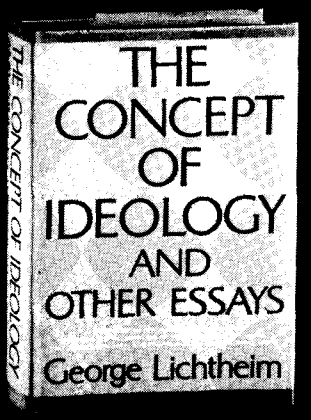

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inter pares. Pius XII occasionally made suggestions but he never commanded; moreover, the historical record shows that many of his recommendations were blithely ignored. The Pope was well aware of the strong hold of nationalistic sentiments over Catholics in both of the warring camps, and therefore he took the greatest possible care to avoid the appearance of taking sides. In other words, the papal policy was to preserve the confidence of *all* Catholics in the head of the Church by following a course of careful neutrality and non-interference in the affairs of the national churches. Such a position ruled out the Pope's endorsement of either the German crusade against Communist Russia or the struggle of the Western allies against Nazi tyranny. And it was this concern for the papacy as a supra-national symbol of unity and peace, coupled with the fear of Nazi reprisals against the Church in Germany, that precluded a forthright condemnation tion of the murder of the Jews.

However, the reluctance of the Pope to be drawn into a public protest against the Final Solution did not necessarily entail a policy of silence or inaction on the part of the local Church hierarchies—quite the contrary. It appears that by the end of 1942 the Vatican was well aware of the inevitability of an ultimate Allied victory. At this point, considerations of expediency began to reinforce whatever moral revulsion the Pope may have felt at the massacre of the Jews. Thus Pius began to drop carefully phrased hints to bishops of countries under Nazi rule that it was in the interest of their people, as well as that of the Church, to go on record against the slaughter of the Jews. For example, in October 1942 he wrote an Austrian churchman that it was not only a Christian duty to intercede for those suffering in the conquered territories; such intercession would also be advantageous to the cause of Germany. "We know enough of the situation and mood of the other side," the Pope stated, "to realize how useful—we are almost inclined to say: how urgently necessary—also from patriotic considerations such an ac-

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tion is on the part of the bishops." He added that he was deeply concerned about the retribution which threatened to fall upon the German people. Similarly, in June 1944 the papal nuncio in Hungary pointed out to the Hungarian primate that a failure to stand up publicly for Christian principles, and against the suffering of fellow-citizens from racial ordinances, would damage the prestige of the Hungarian Church. On the other hand, it was argued repeatedly that the Pope himself could not be more outspoken without making matters worse.

Then as now there were those who did not accept Pius's rationale for this self-imposed restraint. Thus on at least two occasions, Bishop Preysing of Berlin, a man of courage and compassion, urged the Pope to issue a public appeal on behalf of the Jews. Such an intercession, Preysing wrote to Pius on March 6, 1943, was the last hope for the innocent victims, as well as the fervent wish of all men of good will. Earlier that year, Wladislaw Raczkiewicz, President of the Polish government in exile, appealed to the Pontiff for an unequivocal denunciation of Nazi violence in order to strengthen the willingness of the Poles to resist the Germans and help the Jews. The Polish people, Raczkiewicz wrote, "implore that a voice be raised to show clearly and plainly where the evil lies and to condemn those in the service of evil. If these people can be reinforced in their conviction that divine law knows no compromise and that it stands above any considerations of the moment, they will, I am sure, find the strength to resist." And in September 1944, Isaac Herzog, the Chief Rabbi of Palestine, directed a similar request to Pope Pius with regard to the Hungarian Catholics. We will never know whether any sizable number of Polish or Hungarian Catholics would have been influenced by a papal appeal, for the Pope refused to heed any such requests.

As German resistance on the Eastern front weakened, the Vatican became increasingly preoccupied with the fear of an expanding Communist Russia. The Pope also

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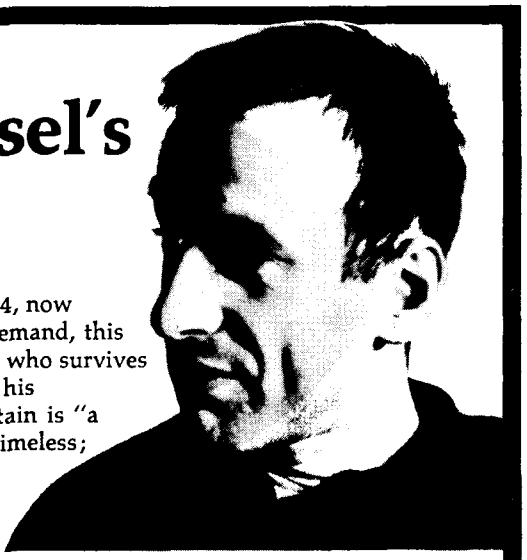

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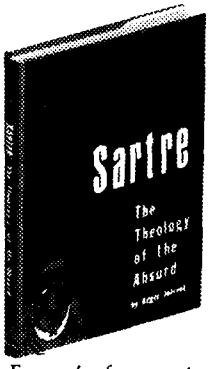

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began to worry about the prominent role played by Communists in the anti-Fascist resistance within Nazi-occupied Europe. In a note of August 20, 1943, the Apostolic delegation in Washington informed the American Department of State that Communism was making steady headway in Italy and Germany: "These facts are a clear warning of the grave peril that Europe will find itself overrun with Communism immediately on the cessation of hostilities." Here, then, was another important reason for Pius's refusal to condemn Nazi atrocities. Such a condemnation, he feared, might further weaken Germany's stand in the East against Bolshevism; it could also lead to the Pontiff's later being blamed by the German people for their country's defeat, as had happened to Pope Benedict (1914-22).

Mr. Lapide's analysis pays no heed to any of these broader considerations. The author simply argues that the Catholic Church saved at least 700,000 and probably as many as 860,000 Jewish lives, that the credit must go largely to Pius XII, and that any public protest by the Pope would have severely damaged, if not made impossible, this quiet work of rescue. The evidence presented by Mr. Lapide, or that available from other sources, neither confirms nor refutes his statistics and the inferences he draws from them. We do not know how many of the Catholics who came to the aid of their Jewish fellow-citizens were moved directly or indirectly by the Pope's carefully guarded public pronouncements; just as we do not know to what extent the heritage of Christian anti-Judaism inhibited humanitarian instincts. And we will never know what might have happened if Pius XII had issued a public appeal on behalf of the Jews. The record indicates that some public protests had beneficial results, while others worsened the situation.

In any case, the question of results can hardly be decisive for Catholics themselves. Many of them are distressed that the Pope failed to uphold the absolute moral essence of the Church and was guided, at least in part, by

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raison d'église. To them, the mere maintenance of the sacramental life is pointless, if the Church ceases to be a witness to the gospel. To the non-Catholic, the apparent preoccupation of the papacy with preserving the Church will drive home the costs of institutionalizing religious and moral sentiments. He may well conclude that human morality cannot and should not be made subordinate to the claims of institutions—be they sanctified in the name of Caesar or of God.

RELIGION & POLITICS

JOHN F. KENNEDY AND AMERICAN CATHOLICISM. By LAWRENCE H. FUCHS. *Meredith Press. 271 pp. $6.95.*

Reviewed by JAMES O'GARA

IN ACCEPTING his party's nomination for the Presidency, John F. Kennedy told the Democratic convention delegates: "I hope that no American, considering the really critical issues facing this country, will waste his franchise and throw away his vote by voting either for me or against me solely on account of my religious affiliation."

The hope was a noble one, but vain. According to the Survey Research Center of the University of Michigan, Kennedy's loss from Protestant Democrats who defected ran to at least 4,500,000 votes, substantially more than the number of Catholic Republicans who switched to the Democratic side. Numerically, then, Kennedy was hurt, but his religion also helped where it counted most heavily, in the big-city states with heavy Catholic populations and many electoral votes. The question, then, of whether the religious issue hurt or helped JFK will probably be debated for years.

Here to shed light on the debate, and in the process to say some enlightening things about Catholicism, is Lawrence Fuchs's *John F. Kenedy and American Catholicism*. Mr. Fuchs is already known for his *Political Behavior of American Jews*, and he seems equally at home in analyzing the political behavior of non-Jews, Catholic and otherwise.

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Already the sound and the fury of the 1960 elections are dying away, and it is good to have some of the central facts and underlying issues in one place. Mr. Fuchs is primarily an analyst, rather than a reporter. (He has some trouble with names, about which journalists are trained to be careful; the Protestant journal is *Christianity and Crisis,* not *Christianity in Crisis,* as he has it; the very able Senator Eugene McCarthy is from Minnesota, not Wisconsin; the French theologian is Henri de Lubac, not de Lubbec; I am quoted correctly, but in the text my name has been anglicized to James O. Garrick and in the chapter notes has been changed to O'Garrick. But these are small matters.) Because Mr. Fuchs is analyst rather than reporter, we get intellectual dissection of the importance of the Houston speech, for example, rather than the flavor of that lion-before-the-Christians occasion. We learn that Father John Courtney Murray and John Cogley (formerly an editor of *Commonweal*) were among JFK's advisers on the religious issue, but we are not told who in fact drafted the Houston speech. We have solid description of the historic roots of anti-Catholic prejudice in America, which is valuable for those not already familiar with it, but no report on the reaction of heavily Catholic big-city dwellers to the TV reruns of Kennedy on the grill in Houston. But if Mr. Fuchs writes from the academic rather than the journalistic world, he deserves our thanks for what he has done rather than criticism for what he has not.

IT IS NOT easy to recapture those heady days when John F. Kennedy tried to win, first the nomination, then the Presidency, and obviously those of us who are Catholics saw the issue in terms far different from those of Protestants or Jews. Some Catholics regretted that Kennedy was nominated simply because his nomination did raise the religious issue. They cited the dark days of Maria Monk and convent-burning, not so long past; they argued that anti-Catholic prejudice was just below the surface and should not be stirred up. The religious question helped to defeat Al Smith, they reasoned, and a Kennedy candidacy would only exacerbate old wounds.

Other Catholics were equally convinced that the religious issue had to be faced. Kennedy spoke for them when he asked: "Are we to admit to the world—worse still, are we to admit to ourselves—that one third of our population is forever barred from the White House?" At their mother's knee they had learned the time-honored dictum of American politics that any male American could aspire to the Presidency, as long as he was white, Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant, but they refused to accept it. They agreed with Kennedy who said: "If there is bigotry in the country so great as to prevent fair consideration of a Catholic who has made clear his complete independence . . . then we ought to know it. But I do not believe this is the case. I believe the American people are much more concerned with a man's views and abilities than with the Church to which he belongs."

Those Catholics who did not fear or regret Kennedy's nomina-

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tion fell, again, into two categories. The average Catholic really did not know what all the fuss was about. He had one interest in the matter: to put an end to second-class citizenship. No matter what others thought, he was loyal to the nation and always had been—if anything, he was too loyal. A believer in a religion that transcends national boundaries, he worshipped all too easily at the shrines of social acceptability and the flag. The real problem for him, as for many non-Catholic Christians as well, was that he too seldom said "No" to the state; not disloyalty but excessive nationalism was likely to be his besetting sin, as Cardinal Spellman's comments on Vietnam surely demonstrate.

Many ordinary Catholics, therefore, regarded any questions put to Kennedy on the religious issue as bigotry and an insult. Catholics who were knowledgeable about Church and State had no such feeling. They knew American Catholics had always been loyal to the nation, and that the American bishops as a body had solemnly pledged their complete devotion to the Constitution, including the First Amendment. At the same time, they knew about the Syllabus of Errors, with its harsh comments on liberalism and progress, about Pope Leo XIII and his plea for a favored position for the Church, about the Index of Prohibited Books. They were convinced that any Catholic candidate had to make his attitude on such matters known; only after John F. Kennedy had done so time and time again did they come to believe that for a certain part of the population no Catholic was acceptable. Then and only then were these Catholics prepared to cry bigotry.

EXPLANATION OF his position on Church and State Kennedy certainly gave—so much so, in fact, that some Protestants began to fear that he was overly secular and perhaps irreligious. Presbyterian Robert McAfee Brown said Kennedy's statements had demonstrated "that he is a rather irregular Christian." *Christian Century* associate editor Martin Marty saw Kennedy as "spiritually rootless and politically

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almost disturbingly secular." Such comments reflect what the campaign clearly demonstrated: to state with precision exactly what is due to Caesar and what to God is not easy, especially in the heat of electioneering. Certainly the 1960 campaign did not settle all questions, by any means. Would Harvard-man Kennedy have won if he had attended parochial schools and a Catholic university? I doubt it—indeed, the suspicion will not down that many people voted for Kennedy precisely because they thought he was not a very good Catholic—hardly a comforting thought.

Let us hope, though, that the issue is pretty much settled now anyhow—thanks to the two Catholic Johns, John F. Kennedy and Pope John XXIII. In Washington, the first John demonstrated that he could be an impartial President when it came to religion—perhaps more so than a non-Catholic; Kennedy, after all, opposed a Vatican ambassadorship, something Baptist Harry Truman favored, and aid for parochial schools, which LBJ got through. At the same time in Rome the second John won the affection of all; he saluted Jews as his brothers and showed us all the meaning of the term "pastor of the world." Most importantly, Pope John convoked Vatican Council II, which moved the Church into the modern world and officially proclaimed freedom and religious liberty as Church teaching; thus the Council laid to rest, hopefully for once and for all, the fears raised in American hearts by the 19th-century Syllabus of Errors and all the rest of it. The two Johns go well together, as Mr. Fuchs rightly points out, and we owe them both a great debt. Our thanks should also go to Mr. Fuchs, who has captured the essential meaning of the two men so well.

THE "BLUM PHENOMENON"

LÉON BLUM. HUMANIST IN POLITICS. By JOEL COLTON. *Knopf. 512 pp. $10.00.*

Reviewed by ANNIE KRIEGEL

AT A TIME when Laborites and Socialists in France are celebrating the thirtieth anniversary of the *Front Populaire*, there has arrived from America the first biography of Léon Blum to be written by a historian. It is not surprising that this notable work should come from the United States: not only has the science of history enjoyed a more prodigious development in America than in France, but Léon Blum himself has remained personally popular among broad layers of American public opinion. This popularity is chiefly notable among Democrats, for whom Blum represents a kind of French Roosevelt (an identification which would have made the head of the French Socialist party very happy, for he did in fact nourish the hope of doing for France what Roosevelt is credited with doing for his own country). Then there is the American Jewish community, which is grateful to Blum for having, at a decisive moment, openly supported the State of Israel. And lastly, Blum maintains a certain reputation among those trade unions which still represent elements that are not only liberal but more or less permeated with the ideals of socialization, and, in

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Chief among those men who struggled with the problems of Jewish consciousness were Moses Mendelssohn, David Friedlander, Leopold Zunz, Eduard Gans, and Heinrich Heine. By 1824, liberal Judaism had not yet produced a vision of its future as a separate identity within European society, but it had been exposed to and grappled with all the significant problems that still confront the Jew in the West.

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Michael A. Meyer is assistant professor of Jewish history at the Cincinnati school of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion.

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a more general way, among average Americans who find three of their strongest convictions united in the figure of Blum: anti-Fascism, anti-Communism, and optimistic idealism.

Joel Colton tells us he worked for ten years on his biography of Blum. This is easy to believe when one considers the volume of information he has collected, and the difficulties engendered by the fact that hardly any unpublished manuscripts were available to him, aside from the documents gleaned from the personal papers of André Blumel (Blum's *chef de cabinet*) and of Robert and Jeanne-Léon Blum. It is known that, during the Occupation, Blum's private records were moved by the Nazis from Paris to Germany. A German document which was among the evidence presented at the inquiry prior to the Nuremburg Trials, and which referred to a portion of the Blum papers, leads us to believe that these records were at least examined, if not thoroughly analyzed, by the Nazis. After the war, however, they were no longer to be found. Possibly they were destroyed during an air raid, but it is also possible that they were transported by the Gestapo to its Silesian hideout, and subsequently seized by the Soviets; in the latter case, they would now be deposited —or, I should say, drowned, buried under tons of other documents—in Moscow. Recently, the Soviets have begun to return such documents to important French deportees (without, of course, giving any precise details, at least not publicly, about how they came to be found), and we may hope that the Blum papers will be among those unearthed in the future.

In any event, deprived of unpublished manuscript sources, Colton had no choice but to plunge into the sea of material written by and about Blum. He has done this with exceptional conscientiousness, treating an immense mass of information accurately and in a dauntlessly methodical spirit. There is not a single aspect of Blum's political personality which Colton has not located, classed, integrated, and interpreted. Consider, for example, the difficult subject of Blum's policy of non-intervention during the Spanish Civil War. As Colton points out, Blum insisted until the end of his life that only by such a policy could there have been any hope of preserving both the Spanish republic and a state of peace. Colton sets forth a meticulous account of Blum's activity between the 20th and the 25th of July 1936, including his visit to England—scheduled before the outbreak of the Spanish affair—where the French Premier was given all kinds of advice pointing toward caution. Although it appears that the English did not issue an ultimatum, "there is no doubt that he [Blum] left London deeply troubled by the mood of the English officials, and shaken in his determination to aid Spain, even though he was not yet ready to abandon his original project."

THE OPPOSITION unleashed in France on July 23 came not only from the Right, which was represented by newspapers like *L'Echo de Paris*, and *Le Jour*, but—what was much more painful to Blum—from a number of Radical representatives and ministers as well.

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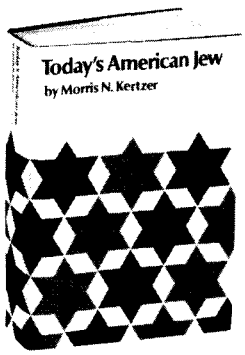

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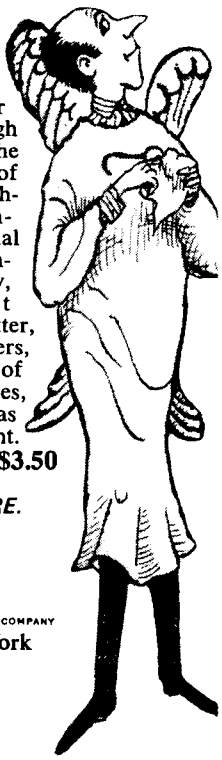

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Jules Jeanneney, president of the senate, reminded Blum that several months earlier, in March, when France's direct, immediate security had been threatened by the affair with Germany over the left bank of the Rhine, the country had hesitated and finally yielded; it would therefore be preposterous to embark now on a policy which might conceivably lead to a "war for Spain." "All of us here," Jeanneney added, "are certain that, should affairs in Spain give rise to any complications in Europe, England would not follow us."

All in all, it took three successive cabinet meetings and several turns of fortune before French policy toward Spain became irreversibly committed to non-intervention. According to Colton, the major factor in this decision was not Blum's reliance on the English ("While he was a Vichy prisoner during World War II, Blum tended to discount the dependence upon Britain as a decisive element"), but the domestic threat of civil war. Blum was well aware of the potentially dangerous split in French opinion: "I fear that half of France would not follow me." Colton concludes his analysis by emphasizing the fact that Blum, as a disciple of Jaurès, thought he ought never to act as if war were inevitable: as a result, he found it unacceptable to run the risk of touching off, as a preventive measure, a defensive war against Fascism, as the Communists had urged him to do.

Colton's treatment of this episode in Blum's career is typical of his method throughout *Léon Blum, Humanist in Politics*. By analyzing each problem in its rich complexity, and by distinguishing clearly among the various forces at work in a given situation, Colton is able to assess with considerable precision both the short- and the long-range consequences of Blum's actions, and to achieve a perspective from which to make competent and reliable historical judgments.

AND YET, having finished this book, having added considerably to my knowledge *about* Blum—his behavior, the different stages in his life, his virtues, his greatness, his defects, his failures—I have the uneasy feeling that I still have not learned anything new about *who* Blum was, what sort of man and politician, and what I ought to think of him. In the riddle of these accumulated facts, I can manage to find neither any meaning nor any integral organization. Is this the historian's fault? Partly, it is. I do not blame Colton's "total data" approach: it is very well executed and in some ways indispensable. Nor may Colton be faulted for the way he handles individual facts within this mass of information. But his treatment of Blum as a whole reveals a number of important shortcomings.

Colton devotes thirty-five pages of his book to the period in Léon Blum's life up to 1914; eighteen pages to the period from the war to the split in the unified Socialist party (1914-1920); thirty-seven pages to the period extending up to the establishment of the *Front Populaire* (1920-1934). This amounts to a total of ninety pages for the entire period preceding Blum's accession to the office of chief of state. On the other hand, 175 pages are devoted to the period from the failure of the *Front Populaire* to Blum's death (1938-1950). This reckoning reveals, as I see it, a profound imbalance. One can certainly understand that Colton should be especially interested in describing the trying times when Leon Blum showed himself to be admirably brave, firm, and lucid; he had, after all, irreproachable eyewitness testimony concerning the years of World War II, the trial at Riom, Blum's imprisonment, deportation, illness, and old age; and he may have borne in mind Blum's own phrase, "Illness teaches serenity, like prison or old age; and I have not missed any of these schools." But this does not alter the fact that during those years of suffering, in which he showed himself to be a figure commanding our respect, Blum was only pursuing faithfully a path he had previously proposed to take. His greatness then was to persevere, not to innovate. And so it seems out of proportion to devote to this later period the meticulous attention which Colton has deemed it necessary to do. By contrast, the

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pages devoted to the long formative years before Blum entered politics are doubly disappointing, both because there are so few of them, and because Colton seems to have forgotten one of the most remarkable details of Blum's career: he did not enter politics until the age of forty-two.

It is perhaps his slighting of this significant fact which also leads Colton to suggest that Blum "always considered himself an amateur in political matters." That statement appears to me to be absolutely incorrect; it was not Blum who thought of himself as a dilettante, but his opponents. On the contrary, it seems to me that once he had agreed to assume political responsibilities—first as leader of his party and then as head of the government—Blum devoted himself to his task with an energy and consistency which were not always justified by the mediocrity of French political life at that time.

Why, then, in 1914, did Blum abandon a thoroughly satisfying life as a government official and respected literary critic? Two factors conspired to lead him to this decision, factors which are related but which caused a shock to different areas of his moral and political conscience: the death of Jaurès, and the war.

During the first ten years of the century, Blum had not, to be sure, been a stranger to the French socialist movement: he had attended the solidarity congress and had, moreover, edited a history of French Labor and socialist congresses. But at that time, following the lead of Jaurès, whom he considered an illustrious leader and with whom he felt a close personal tie, Blum was content to put his technical skill as an experienced jurist at the service of his party; having no political ambitions, and agreeing completely with Jaurès's thought, goals, and methods, Blum did not feel compelled to "play politics."

But Jaurès vanished tragically, and then World War I broke out—a war which, by Blum's own admission, created a turmoil in his innermost being. The fantastic wave of patriotism which, during the first days of August 1914, swept all the energies of the French people along in its wake, carried away Blum as well. Exempted from military service because of his extreme nearsightedness, Blum became *chef de cabinet* under the socialist minister, Marcel Sembat; the die had been cast.

BECAUSE HE neglects to deal adequately with these early events, it seems to me that Colton is partially responsible for the fact that, despite his enormous efforts, one derives from this book no clear idea of Blum's personality or work. Ultimately, however, we must also acknowledge the peculiarly elusive nature of his subject. The "Blum phenomenon," like the "Jaurès phenomenon," is one which stubbornly resists analysis or confident conclusions. One can be both convinced and puzzled, admiring and unsure, approving and dissatisfied. Whereas in the case of Lenin, for instance, the biases are

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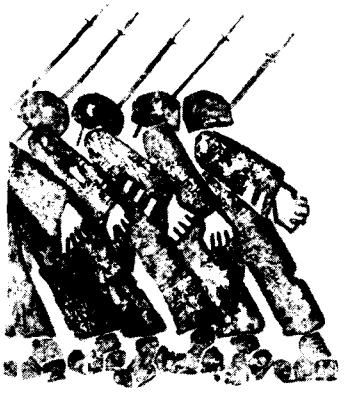

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clear, the strategic and tactical intentions evident, and the gains and losses open to definite assessment, for Jaurès as for Blum the tally of good and evil, credit and debit, is difficult to establish and always arguable. This is so, perhaps, for two main reasons.

The ideas, first of all, which Blum continued to hold about Marxism and socialism, the role of politics in social life, the historical process, and the rhythms and forms of economic mutation, were ideas he had inherited and which he shared with everyone who had been immersed in the climate of the Second International prior to 1914. Also, throughout his entire political life, he had to withstand the challenge to those ideas being posed by the Bolshevik version of socialism. In fact, it was only after Blum died in March 1950, that the world was at last permitted to learn officially and incontestably that the man who had delivered the Tours address had not been completely wrong: socialism's appointment with freedom had indeed been missed in the Soviet Union.

A SECOND reason for the complexity of the "Blum phenomenon" was undoubtedly the unappeasable taste for extremism manifested at that time by the French political sensibility, or at least by the sensibility of the opposition in France, for whom it was long a dogma that no major structural change could be accomplished except by methods that were not only revolutionary but revolutionary in an immediate, direct, and global way; that nothing —especially not the eloquence of facts—could impinge on the rights of ideological coherence and general philosophy. In this case, too, historical irony has willed that the capacity of French politics for extremism should be exhausted only after Blum's death: in the 50's and 60's France has finally discovered the virtues of pragmatism and flexibility, while retaining the inner presence of a "grand design" as a source of energy and renewed vigor. But historical irony is cruel: now that France is at last offering opportunities to the type of socialist which Léon Blum represented at such an unfavorable time, it seems that this type of man has disappeared, or at least that France is no longer aware of the existence of the few who remain.

BOOK REVIEWERS IN THIS ISSUE

MARY ELLMANN *reviewed Pamela Hansford Johnson's* On Iniquity *in our May issue.*

SEYMOUR RUDIN, *a new contributor, is associate professor of English at the University of Massachusetts.*

GUENTER LEWY, *who teaches government at the University of Massachusetts, is the author of* The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany.

JAMES O'GARA *is the editor of* Commonweal.

ANNIE KRIEGEL, *here making her first appearance in* COMMENTARY, *is a well-known French social historian. Her most recent book is* Le socialisme et le pouvoir.

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